

DOCTORAL THESIS

Irish and Scots poverty in the far north of England 1790-1870

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Irish and Scots poverty in the far north of England 1790-1870

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Abstract

The thesis examines poverty at the extreme end of the scale amongst the Irish and Scots migrants who settled or travelled within the far north of England. The problems they encountered stemmed in part from the fears by the host population of the encroachment on established cultural norms and the threat they presented to employment prospects. The main emphasis of the thesis is on the reasons for and results of migration into the area when England was at one of the most critical stages in its history. The thesis challenges the notion that the Irish lived in conditions separated from and widely different to their English and Scots neighbours, which leads to the idea that the concept of ghetoisation does not work in tested areas of this region. It argues instead that there were similarities in their circumstances, differences in their survival strategies, and contrasts in the treatment they were afforded by the authorities. The authorities made strenuous efforts in their attempts to deal with the flow of migrants into and beyond the west of the region as they traversed the country from Whitehaven to Tynemouth, particularly during the period of the famine in Ireland. Their use of the Poor Law, and other legislation to control vagrancy, settlement and removal, were also tested to establish the effectiveness of its implementation.

The timeframe was selected because it embraces a political and socio-economic period that witnessed the transition from the old to the new poor law, rapid urban and industrial growth and the dislocating effects of poverty and famine in traditional societies, not least in Ireland. While there is one general account of the Lake Counties, the wider far-northern region has received only scanty attention from historians in specific parts. Moreover, the historiography has relied on a range of arguments which, whilst interconnecting was not always in agreement. Diversity within the region was significant in terms of reception, law enforcement and the approach to containing the perceived problems, but the prevalence of negative attitudes towards migrants remained consistent throughout the period.

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To the staff of the Cumbria Record offices at Whitehaven and Carlisle I extend my gratitude for retrieving requests with a smile and their help in locating relevant material. The staff of the Tyne and Wear Record Office were equally obliging in their endeavour to fulfil my requests. A very special thankyou goes to Dr Derek Denman who has given his time and expertise with guidance on academic and practical matters which have enabled me to insert maps and format the thesis to produce the final document. Church records were made available to me by the kindness of Father Jerome Ainsworth at St Catherine's Church in Penrith, and Father Richard Simms at St Begh's Church in Whitehaven.

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¹ *Census England and Wales, 1861, Enumerators' Books*, RG9.

Abbreviations

GBH	General Board of Health
CRO	Carlisle Record Office
TWRO	Tyne and Wear Record Office
CEB	Census Enumerator's Book

Introduction

The stranger in society has for centuries evoked passionate antagonism from its members. The rational fear of the outsider was based on the potential incursion into a community by strangers who threatened to subvert and dilute the rights of those who were legitimately cared for by the state and society. Any entitlement to support was strictly for settled members of that society. Strangers were however eligible for relief in cases of urgent necessity, which prevented people from being left to die. Thus, in certain cases, parishes had to provide short-term support to non-settled people. This fear of the outsider knew no national or international boundaries. It could be said to be a universal human characteristic, the same today as it was in the nineteenth century. The Irish and Scots migrants were considered to be a reason for this fear as an alien presence in England. Fears of encroachment on established cultural norms by foreign culture and the dilution of financial resources allocated by the authorities for the support of the host population and its own poor, all contributed to this perceived threat from those outsiders who sought alternative employment and shelter. This is not to say that everyone was a victim of 'migrantphobia'. Some held out the hand of friendship and generosity to those who arrived with the hope of building a new life, either alone or with families, as this study will show. However, it did provide an indication of the obstacles that faced the migrant in their attempt to re-settle in the far north and other parts of England.

This study examines the migration of Irish and Scots into the far north of England. These two groups had a long history of migration into the region, with poverty inextricably linked to the hardship endured in the search for a better life. It was just one of a range of survival strategies adopted in order to escape destitution and poverty.¹ Paradoxically, itinerant wandering work-seekers were a feature of both prosperity and economic decline. On the one hand, industrial growth was a magnet for itinerant labour, on the other hand it had the inevitable consequence of jobless tramping. Seasonal migration by agricultural workers had been a feature of labour movement long before the nineteenth century but the flow of people, particularly from Ireland, intensified in direct proportion to the success or failure of harvests and trade.² The Irish who came to England were considered by some to be 'classic responders to the push-factors of a

¹ D. M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939* (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 8.

² Patrick Fitzgerald, 'The Great Hunger? Irish Famine: Changing Patterns of Crisis', in M. Crawford (ed.), *The Hungry Stream – Essays on Emigration and Famine* (Belfast, 1997), pp.120-2.

patchy rural economy and the pull-factor of a more vibrant industrial economy'.³ At the same time it was a response to the continuation of the struggle that the Irish had experienced for generations as one of political oppression and poverty. Ruth-Ann Harris argued that this migration to English soil was a transient process for most Irish on their way to a better life in the 'New World' of America or Canada rather than the prolongation of an Englishness.⁴ Nevertheless, many Irish had settled in communities across the region and other parts of England and Wales by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Paul O'Leary suggests that this was not so straight forward and that before the Irish famine in 1845, the pull-factor of the economy outweighed the expulsion factor of any distress experienced by poverty.⁵ These interconnected views demonstrate the emphasis that can be laid on one reason or another for population movement, a difficulty that historians cannot avoid when translating empathy into contemporary awareness.

The experience of poverty, a condition which plunges individuals into depths of despair when hunger, cold and infant mortality are endured on the migration journey, was for many part of the process which would lead them not out of their difficulties but simply transfer them to another place. From the mainly charitable support of the poor at the beginning of this period of study, the pendulum swung into an era in which the state gradually took over responsibility. This responsibility had been formally attached to the moral conscience of the church and middle-class philanthropists, and then transferred to one based on rationalism, a market economy and a financially viable administrative structure. The church however, affirming its philosophy to provide help for the poor, continued to vent its opinion on the solutions to the contemporary understanding of the growing financial problem for the local authorities, rate payers and the state.⁶ This did not always prove to be helpful, as this study will show.

As employment became scarcer in Ireland and Scotland, workers and their families found their way in increasing numbers into the remote region of the far north of England where industrial growth was on the ascendancy after the decline of the late eighteenth century. Samantha Williams claimed that before then, any relief for the poor was usually, 'generous, flexible and humane'.⁷ This may have been an accurate comment regarding settled inhabitants

³Malcom Smith and Donald MacRaild, 'The origins of the Irish in Northern England: An Isonomic Analysis of Data from the 1881 Census', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 27, 2-3, 2009, p.153.

⁴ Ruth-Ann Harris, *The nearest place that wasn't Ireland, Early nineteenth century labour migration* (Ames, USA, 1994), pp.16-17.

⁵ Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration, The Irish in Wales, 1798-1922* (Cardiff, 2000), p.34.

⁶ Steven King, *The Making of the Irish Poor Law* (Manchester, 2009), p. 246.

⁷ Samantha Williams, *Poverty, gender and lifestyle-cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1934* (London, 2011), p.5.

in the south of England, where the poor Law was claimed to be more generous than the north in what were described as ‘miniature welfare states’ by Keith Snell,⁸ but for the Irish and Scots migrants having settlement in order to obtain relief was not a condition applicable to their status as migrants in England. As this study will show, they were at the bottom of the authorities’ agenda and provided with relief often grudgingly, rarely with empathy.

The turbulent history of the border between England and Scotland defied definition due to the constant debate and struggle over the line of division. It was not until the eighteenth century that the absorption of Scotland into a greater Britain was accomplished when a tangible border ran from Port Carlisle to Berwick.⁹ The two counties comprising the region named the ‘far north’ for this study are Cumberland and Northumberland, the name Cumberland being derived from Old English *Cumber*, a term used in Anglo -Saxon Northumbria to describe the area occupied by native Britons in the west.¹⁰



Figure 1.1: England and Wales showing the far north counties of Cumberland and Northumberland¹¹

Central government authorities recognised this region as a separate geographic and demographic entity for administrative and statistical purposes in their compilation of a range of

⁸ K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor: social change and agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), p.104.

⁹ Michael Lynch, *Scotland, A New History* (London, 1992), pp. 74-5.

¹⁰ Michael Lynch, *Scotland*, p.316.

¹¹ www.antique-maps-online.co.uk/england-wales-1849.html, accessed 24 July 2018.

enquiries and reports that were published during the nineteenth century. The region acted as buffer zone acting as a point of entry or trans-migration for the Irish and Scots as the local authorities struggled to control their financial resources. Comparisons can therefore be made between the region and other regions to the south of the border where similar issues had to be dealt with. The region is geographically connected but not culturally homogenous which resulted in questions arising regarding the authorities' attitudes to different ethnic groups and how they prioritised their management of the poor. The degree of mobility that migrants were able to exercise, and the reasons for the arduous journeys undertaken by individuals and families over such rugged terrain outside of their parish of legal settlement, raises questions covering a range of issues. For example, who participated, when did it occur, and what was the magnitude of this movement of migrants on the trail from the east to the west side of the region, and how did the law enforcement agencies, workhouse staff and parochial committees react to this flow of migrants? How the government authorities 'kept an eye' on the parochial administrations, who had the task of administering the New Poor Law after 1834, was crucial in understanding the way in which migrants employed their various survival strategies. Furthermore, considering the remoteness of the region, an important question arises: how did the legal authorities control and supervise the legal systems in order to maintain some consistency of law enforcement? The study will also seek to explain and explore the causes and depths of poverty of the Irish and Scots in the region and it will focus on three core themes, which will scrutinise their identity, survival strategies, and interaction with the authorities, the public and the host population, as they travelled outside of their parish of legal settlement.

Methodology

Historical sources are shaped by chance, choice and authorship. The materials employed in this study are no different. Indeed, at this juncture some misgivings need to be expressed regarding those interested parties who may have manipulated the government committee system and given rise to doubts regarding the value of the information printed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings. The influence of the chairman as controller of the proceedings, editor of the text and writer of the final report on topics related to poverty, had an overriding influence on the outcome of the report and its influence on future legislation. Brian Inglis expressed some scepticism about Poor Law legislation in general when he said, 'The proposals of the Poor Law Amendment Act were not based on evidence but the evidence was selected and presented to

justify the proposals'.¹² An overriding feature of commissioners who produced reports for one reason or another, was to allow industry to operate by using the contemporary practice of laissez-faire ideology. The lack of personal testimony of migrants, and the problem of direct access to evidence of poverty in the lives of those it most affected, has thus to be dealt with by the historian in any attempt to reconstruct the life-cycles, particularly after the move away from the parish system of administration after the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. Letters and testimonies were only occasionally found and rarely surfaced in government reports. The men who managed the poor had to be relied upon to provide the background and detail whom they claimed to have some knowledge. Generally, they were confined to Westminster and depended on verbal evidence from people summoned to the capital. However, with all their faults, they provided a good start in the records of the history of the migrants' lives, and some first-hand opinions of workers, owners, managers and authorities, in the industry. Moreover, it is the historians' task to filter such sources and to assess them against each other, in order to establish plausible scenarios, if not hard and fast truths. These primary sources were used from local and central Poor Law records and minute books, all of which complement each other throughout the narrative, with tables and graphs, which illustrate collected data for discussion. As an important barometer of public awareness local and national newspapers provided verbatim reports of meetings of Guardians and public meetings as qualitative and quantitative material for public debate.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the range and quality of historical resources available to the historian was far greater than those of earlier periods. The first population census in 1801 of England, Wales and Scotland provided the recognition of the magnitude of ethnic groups, family size, occupations and age ranges, as a major snapshot of the demographic structure of Britain. Ireland had to wait until 1921 before a similar survey was carried out. For this study, the census records of 1841-1861 were particularly useful but some characteristics of the enumerators' methodology are worth noting. Listing of the workhouse in some towns was simply an 'habitation', which made it difficult to find the records if they happened to be one of the smaller institutions such as Alston, Brampton or Alnwick. Movements between census dates were unaccountable although the place of children gave some indication of parents' movements particularly for Irish and Scots children. Names could be altered in spelling and switched from one census to the next or even misheard by the enumerator, age had also to be taken on trust rather than accuracy, and the response to 'County of birth' was for most Irish 'Ireland', only

¹² Brian Inglis, *Poverty and the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1972), p. 401.

occasionally designated by town or county of birth.¹³ Higgs points out that the place of the birth of each person was not always accurate and that the individual would be inclined to record their place of residence as their birth place so as to gain extra insurance if an occasion arose when a claim for relief was required. Occupation could be open to interpretation where it was recorded of a person obviously without employment and labourers were recorded but often only occasionally employed.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the census records for later in the nineteenth century proved to be an invaluable source when researching occupancy levels, location of ethnic groups, employment descriptions of male and female workers, size of households and families. One other verification difficulty is worth mentioning when attempting to establish more accurate numbers of passengers on the Dublin to Whitehaven and Belfast to Whitehaven sailing routes. A Carlisle newspaper reported ‘from two to three hundred passengers on each passage’ but the absence of ships’, manifests failed to prove this figure.¹⁵

By computing numbers and location of migrants from government and local records, this study will seek to establish the veracity of claims that the Irish dominated the Poor Law landscape, what level of dependence they imposed on the ratepayer and how per capita spending on relief compared with some southern counties.

Structure

Three themes run through thesis: first the development of the Poor Law in addressing the regional problem of poverty created by the patterns of settlement taken up by the Scots and Irish. As a watershed in Poor Law history, 1834 was a crucial year for migrants. The Poor Law Amendment Act was implemented in an attempt to manage those labelled undeserving and due in part to the demands of the migrants on the local and national economy.¹⁶ Secondly, it explores how local and national governing bodies tackled the question of poverty in its various guises of homelessness, vagrancy, the ‘offensiveness’ of immorality and unemployment, which all led to the inevitable claims for relief and the consequent financial impact on the rate payer. Thirdly and finally, it looks at the inter and intra-regional diversity of migrant poverty in both absolute and relative terms at local and state level, which illustrate the severity of its impact on

¹³ Edward Higgs, *Making sense of the census revisited* (London 2005), pp. 83-4.

¹⁴ Higgs, *Making sense of the census*, p.89.

¹⁵ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 18 May 1847.

¹⁶ There is a wide literature on the Poor law of which the following are important contributors: Michael Rose, *The English Poor Law 1780-1930* (Newton Abbot, 1971); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*, (London, 1984); A. Brundage, *The Making of the English Poor Law*; George Nicholls, *A History of the English Poor Law*, vols I-IV.

individuals and families.¹⁷ These central themes have had some coverage as singular interests in previous studies but not as a geographically connected region on the Scottish border, or as a comparative study of the inhabitants of the region.

In exploring these three themes, a number of important questions arise: first, how did the changing definitions and attitudes to poverty, in a region which was undergoing considerable social, political and economic change, affect the Scots and Irish poor? Christine Kinealy contended that the breadth of poverty was dependent on the effects of decades of war, unfavourable trading conditions, eviction from homes, and of living in a socially polarised society.¹⁸ Henry Mayhew, contemporary writer and social reformer, pointed to this polarised society by focussing on the deserving and undeserving as the perennial problem.¹⁹ He also maintained that attitudes towards the poor were wide ranging in their poor-class divisions and middle-class abhorrence, and a beneficent church containing clergy who were publicly outspoken about the condition of the Irish poor.

Secondly, how did the people from two different countries, on the margins of their respective societies and in various states of poverty, take up settlement with the English in the region? Mobilisation of individuals, families and larger groups of people were, and continue to be, frequently driven by poverty to seek a better life and the prospect of employment in the growing English industrialised society must have appeared a practical solution to their problems, albeit fraught with anxieties and difficulties.

Thirdly, in what way, and for what reasons, were the two different nationalities of migrants managed in the region by the authorities who based their approach on social and financial consequences. The police, Poor Law Guardians, magistrates, Members of Parliament, Poor Law Commissioners and church hierarchy (Catholic and Protestant), brought all their literary and oratory skills to bear in their bid to succeed in controlling the impact of the migrant groups in society. They often, but not always, utilised their vested powers to arrest, commit to

¹⁷ see: Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850* (Manchester, 2000); G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People* (London, 1949); William Booth, *In Darkest England and the way out* (London, 1890, repr. Champaigne, Project Gutenberg, 2000); Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the Poor, 1861-2* (Oxford, 2010); C. J. Ribton-Turner, *A History of Vagrants and Beggars and Begging* (London, 1887, repr. USA, 1972); Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers, the English Poor Laws and the People: 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998); Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford, 1999), Chapter 4; Rachel Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in Late Victorian and Edwardian England', *English Historical Review*, 92, 362 (1977), p.73.

¹⁸ Christine Kinealy, *A New History of Ireland* (Stroud, 2004), p.128; see also David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law reform in 19th century Britain, 1834-1914, from Chadwick to Booth* (Harlow, 1998), pp.91-2; Jeremy Black and Donald MacRaild, *Studying History* (London, 2007), pp.16-18; Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester, 2007), pp.199-206.

¹⁹ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and London Poor, A selection by Rosemary Day and David Englander* (London, 1861, repr. 2008), pp.6-7; Steven King, *The Making of the Irish Poor Law* (Manchester, 2009), p. 246.

the workhouse, provide legislation to restrict, inspect, report and morally condemn those who displayed the common characteristics of the destitute and poverty stricken.

To drill down into these key issues and problems all chapters will largely follow a chronological approach, though several chapters are thematic. Accordingly, the structure of the thesis provides a progressive contextualisation of the Irish and Scots poor as migrants in the region. With this in mind Chapter 1 outlines the political and social divisions which identified migrants in the host society with a particular focus on the authorities' legal attempts to monitor and control them. Chapter 2 provides an insight into the settlement and removal of migrants across the region by taking account of the variable approach to the legal process and the public's reaction to the influx particularly during the 1840s. Chapter 3 examines the itinerant vagrant issue which identified vagrancy as a specific category of pauperism to be dealt with by special measures. Chapter 4 focuses on the Famine Irish and their survival strategies as they entered and tramped across the region. This presented the authorities with a range of problems which centered on cost and accommodation. Chapter 5 takes a close look at housing in a west Cumberland town and township by using census based data to analyse and determine demographic parameters. The chapter provides new evidence to test the validity of the 'ghetto' concept with particular reference to the Irish residents. Chapter 6 takes the form of an illustration of the nascence, industrial boom and demise of a home-based industry which the migrant poor relied upon from its earliest years to its collapse. Thus, the lives and circumstances of individuals are captured in the day to day commentary of newspapers, Boards of Guardians records and government reports during the changing fortunes of the poor.

The choice of period, stretching from the last decade of the eighteenth century into the second half of the nineteenth embraces that phase of modern history when Britain emerged from the wars in Europe as an economic power. The array of developments across economic and social conditions, politics and technology, provided a fascinating insight into the development of the human condition and the movement of Irish and Scots across the borders of three countries in their pursuit of a livelihood. The slow decline of the handloom weaving industry, which this period encapsulates quite neatly, provides a snapshot of their dependence on the trade in both the rural and the urban environment. In the early years of the period, the recognition of Malthus' *Essay on Population*, (1798) and the over-supply of labour, steered the political and socio-economic debate as the establishment of the Irish and Scots 'presence' in Britain was consolidated in the towns and villages across the region.

Geographical case studies such as Whitehaven and Carlisle are considered, but so too are thematic ones such as the Irish famine, vagrancy and textile work. Carlisle, with its unique border position in the far north, was so well placed to take advantage of its access to the maritime trade routes. The explosive growth of its population in the first decades of the nineteenth century was augmented by the migration of the Irish and Scots, which in turn radically altered the ethnic base of the population.²⁰ Moreover, the English moved into the town over far greater distances from other counties with the same intention.²¹

Whitehaven, as the principal port of entry for Irish migrants on the west side of the region, provided scope for a further case study where work and housing for the migrant labour force was available. Private investment in the port had developed to such an extent that the coal and tobacco trade were flourishing with Ireland on one of its main trade routes and its principle importer of coal. Men from these townships were engaged in agricultural work, supplemented or dependent upon weaving from the home base, but coal and iron mining operations in and around Whitehaven, under the ownership of a handful of landowners, maintained a large proportion of the population. A government inspector's attention to the state of the town's housing, as part of a national programme of investigation into the state of sanitation in towns across the country, was to reveal some disturbing features which contributed to the poverty debate and ultimate enactment of the Public Health Act in 1848.²² The misery of life experienced in the 'slums' of the town frequently referred to the connection between the Irish and poor housing where many migrants were resident. This study will look closely at the lived experience of Irish immigrants in this port town exploring in particular the household structures and the extent to which ghettoisation was evident in patterns of settlement.

²⁰ Sydney Towill, *Georgian and Victorian Carlisle, Life, Society and Industry* (Preston, 1996), p.50.

²¹ J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, *The Lakes counties from 1830 to the mid-nineteenth century* (Manchester, 1981), p.85.

²² Robert Rawlinson, *A Report of the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water, and Sanitary Conditions of the Inhabitants of the Town of Whitehaven*, 1849.

Chapter 1

The background to migrant poverty

1 (i) *Introduction*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century several larger towns in the north west such as Liverpool and Manchester had a Strangers' Friend Society, an arm of the Methodist Church which upheld the principles of charity for the poor whoever they were.¹ The response to Irish and Scots migrants, when driven by poverty into the far north, was not so universal and differed according to a range of variables, which affected the level of tolerance that the public and the authorities were prepared to endure. Not least of these was the numbers arriving at any one time. The English Poor Law, before and after its major reform in 1834, dealt with them in a variety of ways which differed in both their legal and moral tone from the Scottish and Irish Poor Law of their neighbours.² The evidence for pursuit and condemnation of the migrant, whether inter-county or international, was not always so adverse as D. Ashford points out, 'there is plenty of evidence to prove that the parish officers tended to leave strangers who intruded on their parish unmolested, if they neither attempted to gain a settlement by the delivery of a notice in writing, nor appeared likely to become chargeable in the near future'.³ Politics, ideology, socio-economics and industrial development all had their collective consequences by shaping lives in a multitude of overt and more often subtle ways. This chapter provides a panoramic overview of the main themes. Those themes explore, as the title suggests, the background of migrant poverty examining a number of issues such as inter-regional comparisons, population flow and increase, migration between Ireland and England, Scotland and England and within the region of the far north. It also, in the latter part, explores what I term the image, myth and perception of the immigrant in the sense that their numbers were often outweighed by the way in which people saw them. Put simply, extraordinary stories became normalised by sometimes historical press or other commentators. The chapter also explores some of the infrastructure and structures which supported these immigrants which ranged from the workhouse and the lodging house to

¹ E. M. North, *Early Methodist Philanthropy* (New York, 1924), p.49.

² T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (London, 1999), p.277; Donald M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration, The Irish in Victorian Culture* (Liverpool, 1998), pp.30-32, 35; Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty, England in the Early Industrial Age* (London, 1984), pp. 25-28.

³ D. Ashforth, 'Settlement and removal in urban areas: Bradford, 1834-71', in M. E. Rose, ed., *The poor and the city: the English Poor Law in its urban context, 1834-1914* (Leicester, 1985), p. 60.

the charitable efforts of the local inhabitants. Furthermore, it goes on to discuss what I term the escape routes, by which I mean the routes which these migrants used to leave a hard and bleak life in Scotland and Ireland for intended better lives in England. Finally, we overview what might be commonly called the economy of the migrant from the way in which the vagrants and the poor occupy their hand to mouth, day to day position, through to those who had firmer economic routes but who nevertheless were still poor and often in need of some form of relief.

1 (ii) *Comparators across the region*

It is clear from previous studies undertaken that migrants were managed in a variety of ways when looking for alternative settlement. Almost inevitably there were variations across not only the region but also the country when it came to poor law interpretation and practice. Historians, with varying degrees of emphasis, have pointed to the strong regional and intra-regional variations of both policy and sentiment.⁴

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century poverty was generally perceived to be a fundamental feature of the human condition. Edmund Burke argued in *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity and Want* (1795), in what was a pre-echo of Malthus, that the value of sobriety and work should be impressed on the ordinary worker for ‘while work was the normal state, poverty was the natural outcome of the balance of people and resources.’⁵ This view was to evolve towards a more rational understanding of the structural reasons for poverty but the subsequent historical discourse has so far failed to provide a universal concept which facilitates efforts to either understand or deal with it, particularly when considering cross border socio-political issues in Britain. Peter Gray pointed to the way in which the poor, as a marginalised group excluded from society, were now being regarded as different groups of poor people in a population of those who were on very low incomes.⁶ If one group was treated differently to another by local beadles or magistrates in their desire to maintain minimum rate levels and keep their town or village free from the ‘vagrancy pest’, there is value in understanding how and why this was done and chapter 3 looks at this in more detail.

George Cornewall Lewis’ report on *The State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain* at the end of 1834, one of the landmark texts in the study of the Irish in Britain, conveniently ignored the evidence of several key witnesses who claimed the opposite to that stated in earlier reports.

⁴ Steven King, ‘Negotiating the Law of Poor Relief in England 1800-1840’, *History: The Journal of the Historical Association* (2011), p. 411.

⁵ Burke, cited in Donald MacRaild, *Labour in British Society* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp.116-17.

⁶ Peter Gray, *The Making of the Irish Poor Law, 1815-1843* (Manchester, 2009), p.105.

Mr. Guthrie, Agent to the Duke of Portland was quoted, ‘The Irish are willing, with alacrity and perseverance to work in the severest or irksome and coarse labour’⁷ and, Thomas Farrie, employer of Greenock, announced, ‘they came in the hour of need and provided the animal strength by which the great works of our manufacturing districts have been executed’.⁸ The ‘moral contagion’ is conspicuously absent in these voices amongst a range of others who witnessed to the deviant nature of the Irish, but despite this Lewis insisted that, ‘it cannot be doubted that the turbulent and irregular habits of most of the Irish...tend, by their moral contagion, to injure the superior character of the Scotch and English poor’.⁹ The Irish were clearly an element in society that he would have preferred not to have to deal with and his conviction that morality was a disease transmitted by contact allowed him to ignore the rational evidence. If a testimony in defence of the generosity of the Irish is required, the statement of the clergyman Mr. Collingridge is worth noting:

They are much more charitable to one another, in sickness and in all manner of distress than the English. If an Irish man has a penny, he will give a halfpenny to another Irish man in distress. This is the natural effect of the general obloquy and wretchedness in which they find themselves equally involved.¹⁰

Despite Lewis’ meticulous attention to detail, and the scores of witness statements recorded in this voluminous document, his overriding moral zeal could not resist the temptation to deprecate the Irish and emphasise their deleterious impact on the English. In the far north it was not difficult to find agreement with this as the migrant debate went on in its efforts to undermine the morality and civilisation enjoyed by the English. The following comment from a Newcastle newspaper in 1837 is indicative:

Too deeply sunk in poverty, idleness and barbarism, to be qualified for successful application of a beneficent system, under which misery would acquire a right universal to relief. That is, the Irish are morally and habitually so depraved by the general practice of mendicancy and the absence of the moral stimulus resulting from the want of the comparative civilisation of England and Scotland.¹¹

When this article was written, the disconnection between the three distinct ethnic groups was deeply entrenched in the psyche of newspaper editors, government report writers and to some degree the general public. Poverty was experienced by all three groups but there was no doubt that the ranking of poverty severity and its effect on a particular group existed. The English were

⁷ 1835 (40), *The State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*, Appendix G, p.143.

⁸ 1835 (40), *The State of the Irish Poor*, p. xl.

⁹ 1835 (40), *The State of the Irish Poor*, p. xxxviii.

¹⁰ 1835 (40), *The State of the Irish Poor*, Appendix G, p. xxv.

¹¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 4 March 1837.

considered to be that group which provided the example and measurement of appropriate behaviour. The Scots were placed on a roughly equal footing with the English as the 'comparative civilisation' who readily adopted the English social norms, out of reach of the Irish in their 'deeply sunk poverty, idleness and barbarism'. The Irish, so 'habitually depraved', were perceived as without hope of taking their place in a civilised society and potentially corrupting the English and the Scots.

By the 1850s the English were portrayed as having more in common with the Scots than the Irish. Recent research by John Burnett et al on 'patterns and perspectives' have classified the Scots as less inclined to pauperism through their history of skilled work, entrepreneurship and know-how as a legacy of their own experience in industrialised areas of Scotland, such as Ayrshire.¹² Despite the level of interest aroused by migration and pauperism the significance of Scots migration paled in comparison to the Irish. Even conceding that it was considerably less at this stage in the study, some basic figures provide a preliminary picture. For example, in 1858, 750 Irish poor were removed to Ireland by Poor Law authorities in England and Scotland. At the same time 155 Scots were removed to Scotland.¹³ This agrees almost exactly with the 1861 census data which indicated that there were one fifth as many Scots-born in England as there were Irish-born.¹⁴ It may not be fair to say this diminished the Scots' profile in the minds of the authorities but, what was significant and even more to the point, was that it played down the importance of Scots' pauperism in the mind of the public, even though the same proportional numbers of Scots were removed to their place of settlement. When making an assessment of the differentials between the Irish, Scots and English paupers, Burnett et al point to two factors which were responsible for the lack of negative comment about the Scots movement into the area, which contrasted markedly with the reactions to the Irish. One was the smaller more localised inflow and the other was the less threatening political relationship with Scotland to that of turbulent Ireland. Even though the Scots had crossed the border in relatively large numbers in the eighteenth century and continued to do so in the nineteenth century, the Scots profile was low when compared to the Irish. Moreover, in the census reports for England and Wales there was hardly a reference to the Scots when compared to the Irish. This almost sub-cultural movement lacked the potentially dramatic costs for the parish authorities that made the waves of Irish migration so noticeable to contemporaries.¹⁵

¹² John A. Burnett, Kyle Hughes, Donald M. MacRaild, Malcolm Smith, 'Scottish migrants in the 'Northern Irish Sea industrial zone', 1841–1911: Preliminary Patterns and Perspectives', *Northern History*, March 2012, p.84.

¹³ 1859 (12), *Returns showing number of paupers being removed from Scotland and England*, pp.1-12, xxiv.

¹⁴ John A. Burnett, et al, 'Scottish migrants' (2012), p.78.

¹⁵ John A. Burnett, et al, 'Scottish migrants' (2012), p.76.

1 (iii) *Population movement*

The period of this study encapsulates the dramatic effect of a 63.4 per cent increase in population in England and Wales as shown in Table 1.1 between 1831 and 1871. Cumberland's population increase was not quite so dramatic at 29.8 per cent but Northumberland's surged by 90.0 per cent. Local population variations in the region provided important indicators of migration zones for Irish and Scots and the potential threat to the authorities in the form of future provision of relief for wandering work seekers. All seven towns in Cumberland located within a forty-mile radius of Carlisle expanded in the forty-year period, some steadily, some significantly and the mining area around Cleator Moor by as much as 1450 per cent.¹⁶

In the thirty years to 1831 the population of Carlisle, the capital city and commercial centre of Cumberland, more than doubled. Furthermore, expansion of the coal mining, metal mining and shipbuilding industries across the region created a major pull-factor for Irish and Scottish labour, many of whom were soldiers and sailors discharged at the end of the French war in 1815. Malthus' thesis, which raised the spectre of population growth, fed into these anxieties about the consequences of an unchecked population explosion. It cannot however be concluded that the increase in urban growth in towns such as Whitehaven and Egremont in west Cumberland was due to Irish and Scots migration. According to E. H. Hunt and Graham Davis, only exceptionally was the level of settlement of the Irish and the Scots pre-eminent in the growth of urban population as most of the increase was generated by internal migration from surrounding areas.¹⁷ One noteworthy exception was Cleator Moor where Irish settlement rose dramatically when high grade iron ore was discovered and mining extraction got under way. The migrant presence in this rapidly developing settlement will allow an interesting case study to be evaluated to provide further insights into the conclusions drawn by writers such as Donald MacRaid, J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, and Caesar Cain.¹⁸

¹⁶ J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, *The Lakes Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century* (Manchester, 1981), Table 2.2 (part), p.25.

¹⁷ H. Hunt, *British Labour History, 1815-1914* (London, 1981), p.34; Graham Davis, 'Little Ireland' in R. Swift and S. Gilley, *The Irish in Britain, 1185-1939* (London, 1989), pp. 106-8.

¹⁸ D. M. MacRaid, *Culture, Conflict and Migration*; Marshall and Walton, *The Lakes Counties*; Caesar Caine, *Cleator and Cleator Moor: Past and Present* (Cumberland, 1973).

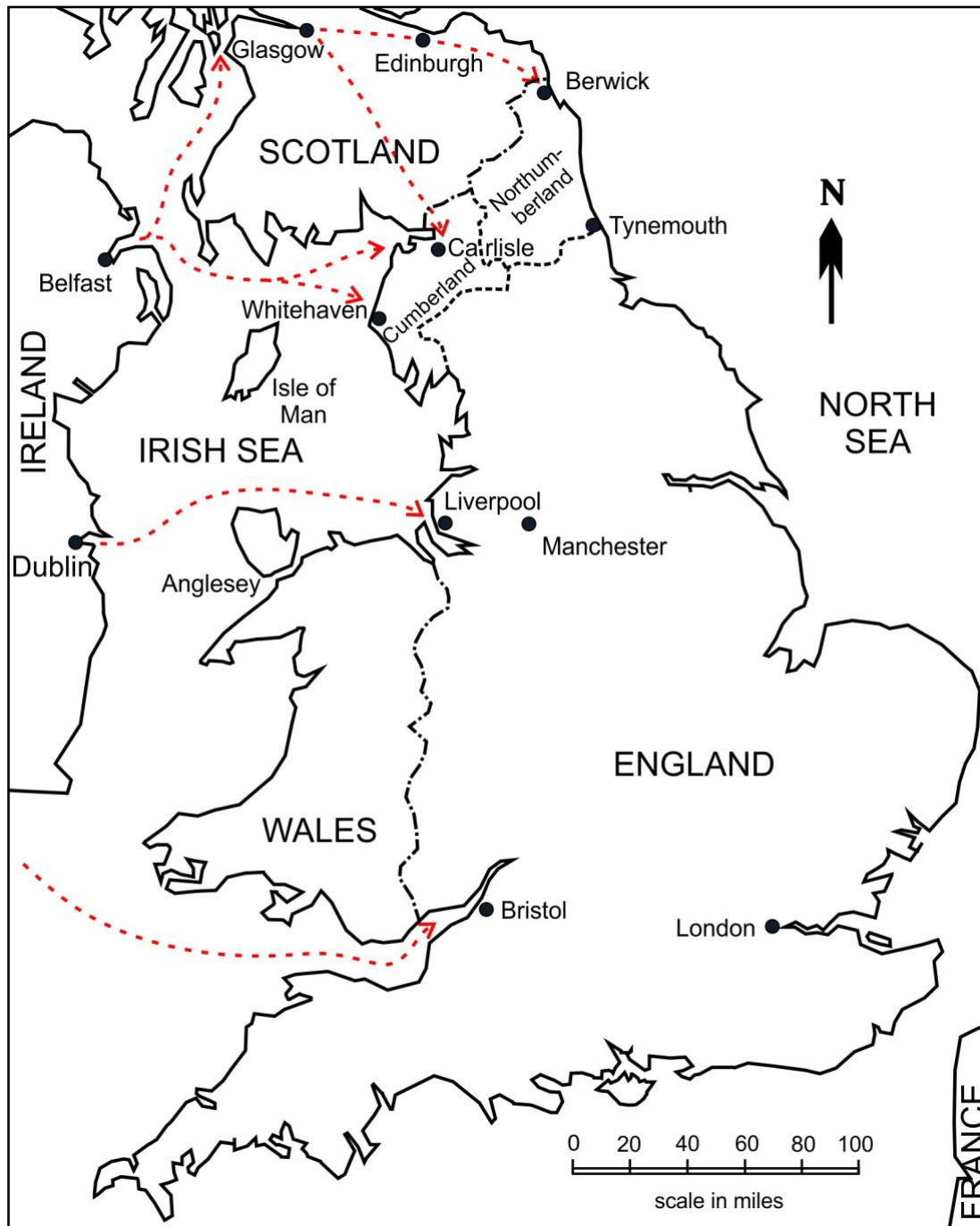


Figure 1.1: Irish and Scots migration routes

	1801	1831	% Change 1801-1831	1871	% Change 1831-1871
Cleator	362	487	35.0	7,061	1449.9
Egremont	1,515	1,741	15.0	4,529	160.1
Whitehaven	8,742	11,393	30.0	21,208	86.1
Cockermouth	2,865	4,536	58.0	5,115	12.8
Carlisle	9,668	20,006	107.0	34,628	73.1
Cumberland	117,230	169,681	45.0	220,253	29.8
Northumberland	170,212	204,000	51.0	387,000	90.0
England and Wales (millions)	8.987	13.897	54.6	22.712	63.4

Table 1.1: Population of Cumberland towns.¹⁹

After 1841, large numbers of Irish and Scots had moved into the villages and settlements in the region, and now represented a substantial proportion of the overall population. Variable labour demands in an unstable economy resulted in a corresponding variation in the reception of migrants who were likely to become a burden on the rate payer and, it was commonly believed, also undermined the wages of the English labouring class.²⁰ However, Graham Davis refutes the notion that, ‘the British economy was not characteristically prone to labour shortages but to labour surplus, especially amongst the pool of unskilled workers to which the Irish were drawn, a surplus that gave rise to unemployment and pauperism’.²¹ This factor will be examined in more detail in chapter 6 when looking at the handloom weaving home-based economy of migrants. To the great advantage of this shifting population the development of the railways gathered pace. By the mid-1840s lines were under construction from Lancaster to Carlisle, Carlisle to Whitehaven and further east in Northumberland which made travel immensely easier than before. Hundreds of jobs for the labourers, including railway building, provided an occupation ideally suited to the Irish labourer from an unskilled agricultural background. Furthermore, this rapid transport facility broadened the radius of work options which had so far

¹⁹ National Census Data; J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, Table 2.2, p.25 (part).

²⁰ D. M. MacRaid, *Culture, Conflict and Migration*, p.36; E. H. Hunt, *British Labour History, 1815-1914* (London, 1981), pp. 57-116 (Hunt provides an extensive analysis of the history and effects of wages and living standards in this chapter).

²¹ Graham Davis, ‘The Irish in Nineteenth Century Britain’, *Irish Labour History Society*, 16 (1991), p.132.

been limited to those accessible by horse-drawn cart or within walking distance. By the itinerant nature of their existence migrants moved into and out of opportunities for employment as they were generated by the economy. However, the tramping nature of the search for employment in both urban and rural areas of the region resulted in the appendage of the term 'vagrant' to the many mobile Irish and Scots and would become a serious burden to bear as the authorities implemented measures to arrest and punish offenders.²²

1 (iv) *Controlling the flow*

For the authorities, the overriding priority was to ensure that an efficient administration provided the state and local communities with firm control of their financial affairs. This translated into management of the poor, particularly the unsettled poor such as migrants, and itinerant work-seekers and vagrants moving between towns and villages on the lookout for work.

It was the Vagrancy Act 1824, that finally replaced twenty-seven existing statutes and reduced penalties for vagrancy as a determined effort to bring it under control.²³ This was principally designed to deal with the professional beggar not the itinerant labourer moving between jobs as the official attitude to vagrancy was centred on the problem of mendicancy. The Second²⁴ and Third Annual Reports²⁵ of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1836 and 1837 made only passing reference to the Irish and the Scots and a question that leapt out here was: why was there was such a gap in Irish interest given the apparent concern in previous reports and commentary? Perhaps the government had other things of import on their mind in the mid-1830s, not least of which was the severe recession in the British economy. By the time of the Fourth Annual Report in 1838 the attention of the administration once again addressed the poor and the problem of housing and disease caused by overcrowding.²⁶ Lodging house conditions, Irish beggars, fever and sickness were all part of the general discourse in town and country in the concern to maintain a labour force in a condition fit for work. This was sufficient reason perhaps, to motivate the authorities to press on with the provision of the 1838 Vagrant Act which was passed in an effort to control vagrants and facilitate removal to Ireland.²⁷ Not satisfied with this level of control, further recommendations were made in 1840 to compel idle persons,

²² C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1998).

²³ 1824, *Vagrancy Act* (5 George 4, c.83).

²⁴ 1836 (595), *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales*.

²⁵ 1837 (546-I) (546-II), *Third Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*.

²⁶ 1837-38 (147), *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales*.

²⁷ 1837-38 (517), *Vagrant Act Amendment, A bill to amend an act for punishing idle and disorderly persons, and rogues and vagabonds*.

beggars and vagrants to the House of Correction, to detain them and force them to work for their maintenance with special provisions for Irish vagrants, who were evidently in a class of their own when referred to for relief or punishment.²⁸

In Ireland, socio/economic structural elements in the 1820s were responsible for the growing numbers of poor. Population growth, the collapsing proto-industrial textile sector and the accelerating land clearance for pasture were creating new classes of paupers who were neither casual nor professional.²⁹ *The Times* warned ‘of a serious migration to England if the land clearances and expulsion of poor peasants were allowed to continue through disfranchisement. Only an Irish Poor Law could prevent this’.³⁰ The old form of poor relief through church, charity and neighbours with the inevitable variable approach to deserving beggars in the neighbourhood was still used as the means of raising funds for relief of the poor. In addition, there was the notion that migration into areas where there was already a high level of poverty only made the situation worse for all. When eventually in 1838 a Poor Law was enacted for Ireland it banned outdoor relief and provided as little as 60,000 places in the workhouses for a population of around eight million,³¹ a small fraction of the numbers required to meet the needs of the destitute. To escape this threat of no relief and potential starvation the Irish looked to the nearest English ports of Liverpool and Whitehaven with their strong geographical and trade connections in textiles, animal stock (cattle, sheep, pigs) and corn.³² For the Irish and the Scots, the prospect of destitution in an unfamiliar country, and the difficulties of managing a different language, could have been worse than unemployment and poverty in their home town where there was at least the partial security of private charity and the support of kith and kin. It was at this time of political, social and economic change, within which ‘poverty’ in the three different countries were managed separately, and often inconsistently, by the government authorities and the parishes, that the scene was set for the laws controlling the immigrant poor to be strengthened.

The key to understanding the many reasons for local opposition to the implementation of a new poor law was the 1662 Act of Settlement.³³ For Irish and Scots migrants the implications of this act were crucial. If they failed to find continuity of employment and were

²⁸ 1840 (245), *Sixth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p.3.

²⁹ Peter Gray, *The Making of the Irish Poor Law*, p.17, in Timothy O’Neill, ‘Poverty in Ireland 1815-45’, *Folk Life*, 11 (1973), pp.22-33.

³⁰ *The Times*, 30 April 1829, 30 May 1829, 18 December 1829.

³¹ D. M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration*, p.18.

³² Peter Roebuck, *Cattle Droving through Cumbria, 1600-1900* (Carlisle, 2015), pp. 27-8.

³³ 1834 (44), *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*.

forced to claim relief from the parish they were liable to be conveyed back to the nearest seaport or border town and forced re-entry to their home country. The embarkation point for the Irish removed from the far north would have been Whitehaven, or later Port Carlisle, which placed an onerous burden on the rate payers of these small towns and their attempts to accommodate the costs of paupers awaiting sea-passage. The only way around this forced removal was to obtain a certificate of settlement from a magistrate allowing them residency in the parish on condition that they did not require support. The problem for the Irish and Scots however was evident: they had no right of settlement in England and, if they happened to fall foul of the authorities they would be removed to Ireland or Scotland. However, the problems of the individual were not uppermost in the minds of the authorities. Their concern was to rid themselves as soon as possible of any charge on the parish by removal of such individuals.³⁴ A detailed analysis of the process, success, failure, impact and injustice of the methods employed is the subject of the next chapter.

The Irish Poor law went some way to resolving the problem but not nearly far enough. Although the formulation of the Law was based to a certain extent on the English equivalent and a similar administration, there were differences in the way it was managed and the elements of its constituent features. Principal amongst these was that it did not allow for any element of outdoor relief. All relief was to be conferred through the workhouse at the expense of the landowners which served as a ‘badge of eligibility’ to distinguish between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’³⁵. This was a crucial feature in the law when making choices about emigration. Administration of the thirty-two Irish unions by their respective Boards of Guardians was controlled from London and all decisions, which affected rate collection, workhouse accommodation costs, medical supervision, changes to the stipulated regime or diet and raising of loans for building works, had to be referred to the Commissioner in Westminster. This allowed the English control of the Irish poor without reference to the British exchequer. Notwithstanding this, the migrants’ thinking would probably have been that poverty in England or Wales was better than the workhouse in Ireland. Peter Gray summarised this state of affairs when he said, ‘the Irish poor law might best be regarded as a hybrid institution whose meaning and practical operations, both locally and centrally, were subject to regular contestations between competing lobbies and interests’.³⁶ It was therefore in spite of these hazards and the

³⁴ Frank Neal, *The English Poor Law, The Irish Migrants and the Laws of Settlement and Removal, 1819-1979*, in D. G. and R. Swift (eds.), *Problems and Perspectives in Irish History Since 1800* (Dublin, 2004), p.102.

³⁵ Ciaran, O’Hogartaigh, M. O’Hogartaigh and Tom Tyson, “Irish property should pay for Irish poverty’: accounting for the poor in pre-famine Ireland’, *Accounting History Review*, 22, 3 (2012), p. 229.

³⁶ Peter Gray, *The Making of the Irish Poor Law, 1815-43* (Manchester, 2009), p.3.

risk of being unable to find employment that the Irish labourer paid his/her passage from Belfast to Whitehaven in the hope of a better life. At best, there was a wage to be earned, at worst, removal back to Belfast. However, it must have been a shock to the migrants who had to tramp the work-seeking routes when they encountered the attitude of the English who feared and despised him/her as an outsider and potential threat to the established order of society. Contrast this with their acceptance in Ireland where he/she 'was an accepted part of everyday life and an essential figure in Gaelic folk-culture and provided for by the active encouragement of alms-giving by the Catholic Church'.³⁷ These contrasting cultural philosophies, referred to earlier in the introduction, are a topic for further research outside of the scope of this study.

Two Select Committee reports, one in 1828³⁸ and one in 1833,³⁹ demonstrated the levels of concern regarding vagrants and provided evidence for eventual legislation. In addition, a Royal Commission was set up in 1832 to investigate the system of poor law in all its practical aspects with particular attention to the financial implications of any future implementation of the existing legislation.⁴⁰ Running alongside the costs of any amendments to the system, and continuation of the status quo, was the debate concerning the morality of the deserving and the undeserving poor particularly the ever-present question of how to deal with vagrancy. This prolonged deliberation culminated in the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act as applied to England and Wales and based its foundation and philosophy on an attempt to distance itself from the generous allowances and encouragement of idleness and immorality that undermined the desirable self-help ethic.⁴¹ It was designed to tackle the question of out-door relief, which was considered to be running out of control and driving down wages and creating a welfare dependent and demoralised working class. Three main principles guided its implementation: no relief except within the workhouse for the able-bodied; such relief to be less eligible than the most unpleasant means of earning a living outside; separation of man and wife to prevent child bearing.⁴² This new intellectual philosophy focused on the control of the undeserving poor, a category that included the Irish and Scots migrants and perhaps due in part to the perception generated by newspapers and official reports. Mark Blaug argued that the Commissioners' conclusions that led to the Act were preconceived and used carefully selected evidence to

³⁷ Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration*, p.27.

³⁸ 1828 (513), *Report from the Select Committee on the Laws Relating to Irish and Scottish Vagrants*.

³⁹ 1833 (394), *Report from The Select Committee Report on Irish Vagrants*.

⁴⁰ 1834 (44), *Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for enquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor laws*.

⁴¹ David Englander, *Poverty and poor law reform in 19th century Britain, 1834-1914* (London, 1998); Steven King, *Poverty and welfare*, p. 227.

⁴² G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People, 1746-1946* (London, 1938), p.276.

support their findings.⁴³ Nevertheless the Poor Law Unions in their various districts are an important focus of this study and operated in rural and urban areas across the region with nine in Cumberland and eleven in Northumberland, a mix of small market towns and larger industrial centres on the west and east coasts. The Board was comprised of only men until the late nineteenth century when a few women began to filter into its ranks. There was a suggestion that some Boards of Guardians were especially cruel and manipulative when dealing with the Irish and that their exclusion from relief forced them to fall back on a wandering existence based on casual begging and petty crime, a discussion which we will develop in a later chapter. This inevitably reinforced the stereotype of the idle scroungers and helped to sharpen the long-established idea that the lower orders would be contaminated by the 'Irish contagion', a condition referred to earlier which seeped into the vocabulary of official and public notices. It was the new Victorian culture that took hold in the churches and the growing middle class and bedded into the fabric of mid-nineteenth-century society that pinned the badge of immorality to the Irish character. Thus, the long poor law debate continued with its scandals and difficulties. At the same time, strong connections were made between the state of the squalid housing conditions and health problems such as fever and epidemics, which were often prefixed by the term 'Irish' to emphasise the depth of destitution.

1 (v) *Image, myth and perception*

As tensions arose between the information and opinion generated by the authorities, the press and the public nineteenth-century vocabulary, used to describe and create the character of the poor, became increasingly vociferous. Stacked with superlatives in a range of accounts scripted for public consumption, it included a series of Parliamentary Reports in which George Nichols referred to the poor as 'mendicant, intemperate, drunken, desultory and idle'.⁴⁴ Inevitably, the law enforcement agencies would have picked up the tone of such imagery in their perception of the migrant but care should be exercised before assuming that they believed or acted upon the various reports from whatever source they came. It is however clear that they were convinced that the poorest of the poor, vagrants in particular, were criminals. Not only did the police, share the distaste of the middle classes for 'tramps and suspicious looking characters', they were also, 'more than willing to act against them'.⁴⁵ This attitude acted as a driver in the

⁴³ M. Blaug, 'The myth of the old Poor Law and the making of the New', *Journal of Economic History*, 23 (1963), pp.151-184.

⁴⁴ 1837, *Report of George Nicholls on Poor Laws of Ireland*, pp.5-6.

⁴⁵ Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice, 1750-1950* (Devon, 2005), p.122.

development of the pauper/vagrant image of the Irish and Scots seeking employment and settlement in the far north. The problem for the authorities therefore was threefold: the image of the Irish, the fears that they generated, plus the numbers flowing into Britain. The implications of the interchangeability of the terms vagrant and tramp in the general discourse and published reports is considered in detail in chapter 3.

The terminology of the early to mid-nineteenth century writers was inclined to seek explanations for cultural differences in terms of racial characteristics. Behaviour patterns of the implanted urban Irish from rural backgrounds had therefore a straight forward explanation – differences in racial origin. One in which evolution had not matched the English breed, which was described as superior and different, in contrast to the inferiority and backwardness of the Irish. It will be one part of this thesis to test the validity of much of the current historiography that the migrant existed as a body outside of the host society rather than an integral part of it. Paul O’Leary was concerned in his study of Wales that ‘migrant identities should be mapped onto existing traditions of historical writing’, which had focussed on the concepts of nationality and/or social class, both of which were perceived as outside of the mainstream of society.⁴⁶ Some research by Peter Weinreich has pointed to the level of success of acculturation whereby migrants accept the culture into which they have migrated while continuing to accept their own, which acted as a further support in their survival strategy.⁴⁷ He qualifies this assertion however by saying that ‘to reject the dominant culture whilst revering their own led to ghettoisation’, a much maligned concept explored more fully in Chapter 5.

At the forefront of the quest to form public opinion on the Irish and Scots character and identity were the newspapers. The central component of their reportage during the period of this study was the hierarchical relationship of the Irish and British identity, namely: British superiority, Irish inferiority.⁴⁸ Moral indignation was commonplace, but an article by the editor of the *Newcastle Courant* adopted a more unusual angle on the matter when he claimed that a lack morality amongst the invading Irish paupers was as much the fault of the ‘dominant priesthood’ as the paupers themselves:

Until the degrading subservience to a dominant priesthood be shaken off, we cannot hope for much success in any endeavour to elevate the moral character of the people. A great deal may be done by improving their social and temporal condition of the

⁴⁶ Paul O’Leary, *Immigration and Integration*, p.7.

⁴⁷ Peter Weinreich, ‘Enculturation, not ‘acculturation’: Conceptualizing and assessing identity processes in migrant communities’, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33, 2 (2009), pp.124-139.

⁴⁸ Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy, 1798-1882* (Wisconsin, 2004), p.267.

inhabitants of a nation steeped in poverty which has the strongest propensity to robbery and bloodshed.⁴⁹

With this tone of reportage, it is not surprising that there was a sense of anxiety about the impact of this fecund evil that had to be guarded against, which robbed and shed blood and was known as the 'Irish pauper'. Here was an illustration of the quantum leap from the morality of the Romantic heyday portrayed by Wordsworth in the late eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century to the years following the enactment of the Poor Law Amendment Act. There was now a view that the threat of the wandering 'inundations of Irish paupers' with their potential for robbery and bloodshed were on the very doorstep of the middle classes. This marked a transition from the unease about 'the lack of morality the Irish were prone to once they were removed from the flock of their home priest' to that of the 'freedom to indulge in their animal behaviour', under 'the degrading subservience of the dominant priesthood'.⁵⁰ Instead of the upholders of the moral high ground the clergy were now being held responsible for the decline of their flock's morality. 'Hordes and swarms of Irish' may have fallen from the pen of the writer in a bid to generate maximum fear in the mind of the reader, but it was possible to detect an undercurrent of opposition to this tone as the following decade unfolded. Another article in a different newspaper reviewed the comments of Robert Pashley, a Queen's Counsellor, who wrote on 'the favourite subject of men, the immigrants who have penetrated the far north'.⁵¹ After condemning the erroneous figure of Pashley that, '1 in 4.7 of the population are dependent paupers', the editor portrayed the character of the working man as 'having virtue and vice with no justification whatsoever to be libelled in this way by a man who was so falsely informed'. Nevertheless, this was insufficient to change the tide of opinion directed at the migrants. The poor were seen as those 'without discipline, idle and indigent, a description attached to the Irish with all the hyperbole the press could generate in a cocktail of imagery which the historian is challenged to comprehend. However, the stereotype of the drink sodden Irishman was well known and, like all myths, did not stand up to close scrutiny.⁵² The period of this study is therefore a time when concepts concerning poverty and morality, amongst the mass of individuals who were experiencing the former and criticised for the lack of the latter, evolved in the continuous use of rhetoric at local and national level. In towns such as Liverpool and Manchester the perception of Irish immigration that was generated, was more of the same

⁴⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 26 April 1834.

⁵⁰ 1835 (40), *Report of the State of the Irish in Great Britain*, p. xi, Appendix. p.18.

⁵¹ *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 11 Sept 1852, p.5.

⁵² Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration*, p.2.

filth, drunkenness and violence. This had created a legacy of prejudice which persisted into the late nineteenth century with no shortage of articles across the region that sought to inform the public on the subject of ‘the idle Irish pauper’, which were picked up by journalists, re-printed and used in Carlisle newspapers on a regular basis. One aspect of this study will be to determine the character and veracity of these articles as a feature of regular reporting on the migrant in the far north. Conveniently for the local authorities they would have provided a scape goat for any local shortcomings on their behalf’.⁵³

A plethora of parliamentary papers by notables such as: James Philip Kay, George Cornwall Lewis, and Robert Rawlinson have provided reams of statements, reports and evidence to support the differentiation between the deserving and the undeserving poor, as well as their preferred options to manage the ‘hordes’ of poverty stricken Irish coming into the country. Kay, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in 1835, had a remarkable influence on nineteenth-century perceptions of the Irish in his comments when he made comparisons between the English and the Irish character. He described the Irish as, ‘brutal, sloth and savage’ when compared with the English placid contentment.⁵⁴ His language moved indistinguishably between physical descriptions of insanitary conditions and the moral condemnation of slum dwellers who occupied them. What began with the ‘contagion’ of disease led inexorably to the ‘contagion’ of Irish migrants.⁵⁵ Poovey makes a considered criticism of Kay for this attitude when he said, ‘In Kay’s treatment of the Irish we see a particularly complex example of the way that a proponent of one set of issues – in this case social reform at the national level – mobilised prejudices against a particular group of people by constructing an image of the nation that excluded this group’.⁵⁶ The visibility of the Irish lay in the conjunction of migrant labour, poverty and Catholicism which were all recognised as ‘Irish’ and ‘immigrant’. What the relationship was between the poverty of the Irish Catholic and the Irish protestant was not clear but this visibility did explain to some extent why the Scots were not so ‘noticeable under the eye of the Guardians, the magistrates and the police’. Kay’s influential work could not always

⁵³ Audrey Coney, ‘Mid Nineteenth-Century Ormskirk: Disease, Overcrowding and the Irish in a Lancashire Market Town’, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 139 (1990), p.97.

⁵⁴ 1835 (500), *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales*, Appendix B, p.186.

⁵⁵ J. P. Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes employed in the cotton manufacture in Manchester*, (Manchester, 1832, repr. 1969), pp. 34-5, in Graham Davis, ‘The Irish in the Nineteenth Century’, *Irish Labour History Society*, 16 (1991), pp.21-2.

⁵⁶ M. Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1863* (Chicago, 1995), p.95; Mary J. Hickman, *Alternative historiographies of the Irish in Britain: a critique of the segregation assimilation model*, in R. Swift and G. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Victorian Britain* (London, 1989), p. 245.

be applied as a yardstick for prejudice when evidently the great majority of Irish found employment and independence both for themselves and their families.

Thomas Carlyle, the political thinker and social philosopher, born and raised in the far north and held in some regard by his contemporaries, was one of the most vociferous critics of the Irish. He went to great lengths to ensure that there was no doubt in anyone's mind about the character of the Irish and described the difficulties he faced in accommodating this race in his country:

Crowds of miserable Irish darken our towns. The wild Milesian is the sorest evil this country has to strive with. In his rags and laughing savagery, he is there to undertake all work that can be done by mere strength of hand and back. The time has come when the Irish population must be either improved a little or exterminated.⁵⁷

When a statement such as this spilled from the pen of such eminent thinkers, which in today's terms advocated nothing less than ethnic cleansing, it was not surprising that some public credibility was given to the idea that the Irish were 'different'. These 'differences' were given a sharper edge, a few decades later by Marx who commented:

The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standards of life...he cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker...the Irishman sees the English worker at once as the accomplice and stupid tool of the English domination of Ireland.⁵⁸

This was to become one of the overriding concerns of the English establishment - that the Irish peasant society undermined the morals and living standards of the English. It thus provided the fuel for the '*Condition of England*' question linking it to the raison d'être of the 1836 report on the *State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*, which was to justify an Irish Poor Law and so reduce the inflow of poor Irish into Britain. The national and local press continued to report this across the country in graphic statements. In Carlisle, the *Carlisle Patriot* (a Conservative newspaper) chose to include an article by Bishop Whately, written one hundred years previously and quoting George Berkeley, which was alleged to illustrate the unchanging character of the Irish pauper:

Never was there a more monstrous conjunction than that of pride and beggary, and yet this prodigy is seen every day in almost every part of the kingdom. These people are more destitute than savages and more abject than Negroes.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ T. Carlyle, *Chartism*, (1840), pp.28-9.

⁵⁸ K. Marx to S. Meyer and A. Vogt, 9 April 1870, in D. Caute, ed., *Essential Writings on Karl Marx* (New York, 1967), p.199, in P. Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution* (London, 1992), p. 213.

⁵⁹ *The Carlisle Patriot*, 23 June 1847.

One Poor Law Commissioner, Edward Twistleton, was so concerned about the tone of this article that he reported to the House of Commons that such racist opinions as this, and others in such influential newspapers as *The Times*, were having a negative impact on the British policy.⁶⁰ A policy, however severe in its application to the management of the poor, needed to be seen as firm but fair by the public.

1 (vi) *The workhouse facility*

The power of the Poor Law Commissioners, at least on paper, was intended to be over- arching in its control of the Unions but in practice a determined Board of Guardians, with all the nuances of local politics, managed to ignore at least some of the Orders of the Commissioners.⁶¹ For example outdoor relief to the able-bodied continued by many Unions because it was cheaper than providing a workhouse and remained the preferred option for several newly appointed Boards of Guardians.

Poor Law Union	Pre-1834	1830s	1840s	1850s and later	Inmate Capacity 1853	Inmate Capacity 1860 ⁶²
Alston & Garrigill	<1834				80	80
Bootle	<1834			1856	62	100
Brampton	<1834			1875	100	100
Carlisle	1784 1829			1863	441	251
Cockermouth			1840		360	360
Longtown	1828				150	130
Penrith		1838			240	223
Whitehaven	1743			1856	335	424
Wigton			1842		200	200
Totals					1968	1868

Table 1.2: Workhouse construction dates and capacity, Cumberland Poor Law Unions⁶³

In the far north however there was a determined effort to provide workhouses, albeit

⁶⁰ Christine Kinealy, *This Great Calamity, The Great Irish Famine, 1845-52* (Dublin, 2006), p.105.

⁶¹ Mary MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law Policy and the Crusade Against Out-relief', *Journal of Economic History*, XLVII (1987), p. 607.

⁶² *The Union, Parish, and Public Health Officers' Pocket Almanac and Guide* (London, 1868), pp. 28-31.

⁶³ P. Higginbotham, *The Workhouse Encyclopaedia* (Stroud, 2012), Appendix E, pp. 332-3.

with a noticeable difference between the counties. The ever-present concern in the minds of the Guardians was, how could they find the funds to provide for paupers under the new system of relief? Any spending on workhouse accommodation was likely to have been viewed with some reticence, and perhaps perceived as making an effort to provide shelter for the undeserving. One solution, to avoid this was by dealing with them on an ad hoc basis, offering accommodation in common lodging houses or in temporary casual wards, rather than taking on large loans to finance a new building. Lewis Darwen's research concurs with this and goes further by saying that the new regulations implemented in 1834 were seen by many as inhumane.⁶⁴ The common lodging house alternative was considered more humane and to be inapplicable to most able-bodied paupers. 'Those who did not conform to this view could find themselves condemned for their inhumanity, or 'humane inhumanity', as the Rev. John Owen Parr memorably described Thomas Batty Addison's approach to relief administration in 1848.

Six out of nine Cumberland Unions had a workhouse operational in 1834, the year of the implementation of the new Poor law Amendment Act, whereas only three out of eleven were operational in Northumberland (Tables 1.2 and 1.3). By 1840 both counties had only two Union Districts without a workhouse, which could be interpreted as a very enthusiastic response to the Commission's directive that indoor relief was to be provided for pauper management after 1834.

Poor Law Union	Pre-1834	1830s	1840s	1850s And after	Inmate capacity 1853	Inmate Capacity 1860 ⁶⁵
Alnwick			1840		148	148
Belford		1839			50	50
Bellingham		1839			53	53
Berwick-upon-Tweed	<1834				100	204
Castle Ward			1848		100	100
Glendale		1839			70	77
Haltwhistle		1839			60	60
Hexham				1883	264	264
Morpeth	<1834				92	84
Rothbury	<1834				52	50
Tynemouth		1838			376	332
	Totals				1365	1422

Table 1.3: Workhouse construction dates and capacity, Northumberland Poor Law Unions⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Lewis Darwen, *Implementing and administering the New Poor Law in the industrial north: a case study of Preston union in regional context, 1837-61*, PhD thesis, Nottingham-Trent University (2015), pp. 55-56.

⁶⁵ *The Union, Parish, and Public Health Officers' Pocket Almanac and Guide* (London, 1868), pp. 88-91.

⁶⁶ P. Higginbotham, Appendix E, pp. 357-8.

The completion of Wigton's workhouse in 1842 made Cumberland one hundred percent compliant, whereas it was not until 1883 that the Hexham Union in Northumberland finally complied. How many migrants made their way to these workhouse gates for relief in their distress will be established and compared across the far north and in the counties further south in a later Chapter.⁶⁷

In other parts of the country the building of workhouses did not proceed with quite the same enthusiasm. Opposition to the New Poor Law was reported widely in articles and incidents in the national and local newspapers and public perception of the 'Irish effect' was spelt out in this longer than usual quote from an article in a Newcastle newspaper:

The mischief and misery resulting from her (*Ireland's*) inattention to her own poor is sufficiently deplorable and reprehensible so far as England is concerned. As the case stands now it may be said that Ireland conceives herself entitled to pursue a reckless career of pro-creation, under the conviction that in England provision must be made for the whole of her pauper progeny. Not only have we to provide for her poor, but those of the able-bodied who are willing to work to come into our labour market by hordes and depress the wages of labour. When Ireland does not provide for one single English pauper and does not even contribute one farthing by legal obligation towards maintenance of one single Irish pauper out of the myriads that swarm here and everywhere else in the Empire at large.⁶⁸

Here there is an article dripping with prejudice in which the Ireland's poor are painted as Ireland's problem and the perception of a separate state was thrown at the reader in an effort to condemn any claims for relief by the Irish. The failure to honour the legal and diplomatic ties with Britain established in the 1801 Act of Union and Ireland's economic value as a trading partner, could be construed as a serious disregard for Britain's obligations. Criticism of the government's approach to these obligations continued throughout the 1840s and the period of the Irish famine when Trevelyan, Secretary to the Treasury, was steadfast in maintaining his position that trade in livestock and grain should continue as normal from Ireland regardless of the desperate plight of the starving Irish population. Fecundity was evidently also an Irish problem on the mind of the writer of the article, as reckless pro-creation was blamed for the financial burden of support for the destitute. All this, together with the threatened surcharge to the English economy as cheap Irish labour overran not only England but the Empire as well, displayed a woeful ignorance of the human condition.

⁶⁷ Steven King, *Poverty and welfare in England 1700-1850, a regional perspective* (Manchester 2000).

⁶⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 26 May 1838.

Charles Buller (1806-48), the first President of the Poor Law Board was keen to ensure the Boards of Guardians stuck to letter of the law which advised in-door rather than outdoor relief wherever possible. He took up this cause in his determined intention to strengthen the 1834 Act and ensure that only the deserving, a term still to be defined with any clarity, should receive relief. He insisted that particular vigilance should be exercised when providing relief for vagrants who were not entitled to it.⁶⁹ He managed to do this to some degree by persuading Unions to keep a more vigilant eye on those who could be less deserving. For some their priorities were set in evangelical stone and supported the many witnesses in the Cornewall Lewis Report in 1837, which called local factory supervisors to testify to the Committee on the moral stature of the Irish. One, Alexander Carlisle, justified his opinion of the Irish by saying, ‘Give an increase to a respectable weaver, and he will multiply his comforts’; ‘give a less cultivated man a considerable increase, and you, almost to a certainty, morally degrade him; it is spent in mere animal enjoyment.’⁷⁰ For the thousands of weavers in the far north their main concern was to obtain a sufficient wage to avoid poverty rather than pursue ‘animal enjoyment’, and chapter 6 will look at their life chances and choices in more detail.

1 (vii) *Escape routes*

For many, the escape routes from the poverty they had experienced in their homes in Ireland and Scotland, were through the promise of a migrant passage to a ‘better homeland’ in places such as America and Canada. Schemes were broached and implemented slowly in both Ireland and Scotland.⁷¹ For those in the Highlands heading south to the lowlands and the border region of the far north, the steady haemorrhaging of impoverishment tightened its grip as thousands awaited their opportunity to leave their stricken homes. Witnesses such as the Reverend Dr Norman McLeod and John Bowie, managers of several west Highland estates, had given evidence to the 1841 select committee and remained steadfast in their support for emigration as a preliminary form of poor relief.⁷² Judging by the numbers who crossed the border into England it is clear that this option was rejected by many who probably harboured the distant hope that one day they would be able to return to their homeland.

From 1846 the major part of relief in Scotland was borne by the Central Board, not the government, and was extended for the starving as well as the proprietors. Critics have argued

⁶⁹ 1849 [1024], *Report of the Commissioners for Administering the Laws for Relief of the Poor in England*, p.6.

⁷⁰ 1835 (40) *Report of the State of the Irish in Great Britain*, p.132.

⁷¹ Marjorie Harper, *Adventurers and Exiles: The Great Scottish Exodus* (London, 2010), pp.49-50.

⁷² T. M. Devine, (ed), *Irish immigration and Scottish society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), p.94.

that not only did the landowners shirk their legal and moral responsibilities but also took the opportunity to improve their estates through the drainage, pier and road building work schemes initiated by the Central Board and designed to benefit the destitute. One Inverness newspaper went further by saying, ‘This so-styled co-operative system is neither more or less than a monstrous malversation of a charitable fund by giving largesse to noblemen and gentlemen, who may be truly said to have improved their estates by means of public subscriptions’.⁷³ This was certainly not the case for all proprietors, some of whom faced ruin, but the great majority came through the famine with their estates intact, in stark contrast to those who worked on their land.⁷⁴

The same ideas were used to promote emigration from Ireland but the route for the Irish, to the despair of the authorities, was through ports like Liverpool and Whitehaven, which was anything but straight forward as thousands clamoured for help as they waited in transit or remained in the town as dependent paupers. Two implacable opponents of charitable relief, Sir John McNeill and, more significantly, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to the Treasury and the civil servant primarily responsible for Irish famine relief, attempted to steer the process as wave after wave of Irish made their way south. Sourcing of labour was initiated to facilitate public works programmes but these were positioned at such a late stage in the programme of relief effort that those affected were too malnourished and poorly clothed to physically manage the tasks required of them.⁷⁵

The inevitable consequence of poverty was reliance on charity in its various forms. Charity, in terms of bequests, benefactions and private funds and gifts of ‘bread and beer’ at the back door, were the normal routine for dealing with those who fell on hard times without work or support from kith and kin. It was this ‘mixed economy’ of social welfare that was increasingly recognised as a facet of relief that applied in the nineteenth century’.⁷⁶ Any such provision by agencies, independent of the Poor Law Unions, would have been of substantial benefit for the authorities and the ratepayer as a supplement to their budgets. This, in the opinion of the clergy, the Guardians and the officials in Whitehall, undermined the numbers of poor who needed to claim relief from the poor law Union.⁷⁷ It also acted as a buffer to the rate assessment in some parishes for which they would have been undoubtedly thankful. It was Colin Jones who

⁷³ *The Scotsman*, 8 January 1848.

⁷⁴ T. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (London, 1998), pp. 416-9.

⁷⁵ F. Neal, *Black 47, Britain and the Famine Irish* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 47-84.

⁷⁶ Samantha Williams, *Poverty, gender and lifestyle-cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1934* (London, 2011), p.6.

⁷⁷ Brendon O’Cathaoir, *Famine Diary* (Cork, 1999), p.142.

suggested that informal charity probably exceeded the scale of resources transferred through poor relief in most years, and there may be some truth in this statement, but without comprehensive figures to support his suggestion it remains speculative.⁷⁸ What is without doubt however, is that it was an extremely useful financial aid for the Treasury to rely on and some measure of its value will be assessed as part of this study in chapter 4. Being poor in Ireland may have been considered a far worse option than having to face poverty in England but, as it turned out for many, the conditions that they faced when they arrived were at least as bad as they had to endure in Ireland as one government inspector testified.⁷⁹

1 (viii) *The economy of the migrant*

As a major source of income for home based labour, much favoured by the Irish and Scots migrants, weaving of cotton cloth was to become the dominant form of domestic employment.⁸⁰ After 1774, Calico printing increased fourfold in the closing decades of the eighteenth century and the demand for printed colourful cotton cloth surged.⁸¹ For migrants, the apparent ease with which a livelihood could be established in the weaving industry in Carlisle, must have been of considerable attraction. The acquisition of a loom at a rent of around one shilling per week and the ease with which the skill to weave could be learned, was for many men a much better alternative than labouring in the field. Mill owners were enthusiastic to provide machine and materials, which added to their output and ultimate profit. With their sights set on such prospects Scots migrants from Dumfriesshire crossed the border into Cumberland and from Roxburghshire into Northumberland, with similar expectations to the Irish migrants, and sought new lives offered by the promise of higher wages.⁸² The numbers of families and the extent to which derived income from the textile trade will be tested in chapter 6. In England, English weavers with legal settlement, whose total family income was consistently below subsistence levels, received supplements from the poor rates, but there was no such security for the Irish or Scots migrants who were either under threat of removal to their legal parish of settlement, or forced to manage without any authorised relief. All evidence indicated that the

⁷⁸ Barry & C. Jones (eds.), *Medicine and Charity before the Welfare State* (London, 1991), pp.1-7.

⁷⁹ Robert Rawlinson, *A Report of the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water, and Sanitary Conditions of the Inhabitants of the Town of Whitehaven*, 1849.

⁸⁰ *Bailey's Northern Directory*, 1781; *The Universal British Directory*, 1790.

⁸¹ *The Universal Directory*, 1790.

⁸² N. Murray, *The Scottish Handloom Weavers* (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 32.

Scots did not receive such benefits except at times of exceptional stress, and there was no provision for the able-bodied poor in Scotland.⁸³

P. O'Brien and C. Keyder argued that the availability of cheap and plentiful labour gave little incentive for manufacturers to switch from hand techniques to new forms of mechanical production, an argument which is still contested by historians.⁸⁴ This favoured the migrant labour pool which became more and more plentiful during the 1840s, and often comprised women, children and elderly relatives, all of whom were reluctant to work in the factories but prepared to work for low wages to accommodate their domestic responsibilities and dependency. For the employer, this was a very convenient and flexible system from which to extract maximum profits and competitiveness with scant regard for the poverty that suffused the workers' lives.⁸⁵ The advantages the migrants had as potential employees were minimal but their strength lay in the competitive labour market as the demand ebbed and flowed. When it increased there were large numbers available for work, when it decreased the Irish were known to be willing to accept the very least in wages. Jeffrey Williamson argued that the labour supply of even the majority of the unskilled Irish was 'simply not crucial to the British Standard-of-Living Debate', and only very slightly depressed the incomes of the British working class.⁸⁶ This is a highly technical argument and open to further interpretation, but he concluded that as an unskilled minority of workers, their impact on the British economy was very small. Moreover, he adds that their presence expanded the amount of work to be done and so helped to generate increased output and prosperity rather than create even more poverty. This conclusion deposes the idea that any Irish presence served to depress wages and deprive English workers of jobs they would have had in the absence of the Irish workers. But the question remains, did this argument hold good for those areas where a specific manufacturing base such as cotton weaving dominated the local economy such as in Carlisle?

The First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1835, acknowledged the need for supplementary labour for the cotton industry, in which the Irish migrant population were strongly represented, and also noted the 'vast supply available in Ireland'.⁸⁷ Management

⁸³ Duncan Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers* (Cambridge, 1969), pp.236-7.

⁸⁴ P. O'Brien and C. Keyder, *Economic growth in Britain and France, 1780-1940* (London, 2012) [A review of the evidence is provided in chapter 4 of this thesis].

⁸⁵ Geoffrey Timmins, *The Last Shift, The decline of handloom weaving in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (Manchester, 1993), p.2; Duncan Bythell, *The sweated trades* (London, 1978), p.158; J. A. Schmiechen, *Sweated Industries and Sweated Labour* (1978), pp.12-17.

⁸⁶ Jeffrey G. Williamson, 'The impact of the Irish on British labour markets during the industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, 46, 3 (1986), pp.693-720.

⁸⁷ 1835 (500), *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales*, pp.185-186.

of numbers would, in the opinion of Lancashire manufacturers, have been far easier if an earlier migration of English labourers from the south had taken place rather than allowing this influx to happen. Christine Hallas asserts in her study of poverty in Yorkshire that ‘Elasticity of labour could be met by Irish and Scots migrants and by local under-employed female workers’.⁸⁸ But the pace of growth in the manufacturing industries was dependent upon extensive immigration of Irish, a factor the Commissioners needed to accept if the economy was to flourish.

Those who drifted into the area to meet the demand of the growing trade and its associated industrial expansion, were able to do so with some prospect of employment. It was a far more attractive prospect than work in the south where agricultural wages were around half of what the labourer could expect in the north.⁸⁹ Access was also far easier for the Irish and the Scots than it was for the unemployed in the south of England and elsewhere in the country. A relatively short journey across the Irish Sea or the Scottish border must have been far preferable to the long trek or cart journey overland from the southern counties in spite of the hazards of sea crossings at the time. Even so, this regional economy had its variables. The Northumberland labourer could be far worse off in the east of the region than the Cumberland labourer in the west.⁹⁰ As wages fell and the cost of living rose, ‘economy of makeshifts’, a term coined by Olwen Hufton in relation to the family economies of the poor in eighteenth-century France,⁹¹ provided the poor with a series of survival strategies which included any self-provisioning activity, charitable gifts or poor relief.⁹² In addition to those legal sources already referred to there were other illegal means such as , poaching, begging, vagrancy, squatting, defrauding the poor law, petty theft, prostitution and receiving stolen goods, all of which could be added to the multifarious list of attempts to feed individuals and families. Poachers would have enjoyed a ready market for their catch or swapped rabbits and fish for favours in pubs. To be caught however could result in a fearful fine or imprisonment, but a month in prison and hard labour could have been a fair price to pay when faced with starvation.

1 (ix) *Conclusion*

Coping with economic fluctuations and the resultant insecurity, was a perpetual problem for the poor. On the other hand, the problem for the authorities was to ensure that any influx of

⁸⁸ Christine S. Hallas, ‘Poverty and Pragmatism in the northern uplands of England: The North Yorkshire Pennines c.1770-1900’, *Social History* (2000), 25, 1, p.75.

⁸⁹ F. Musgrove, *The North of England, A history from Roman Times to the present* (Oxford, 1990), p.267.

⁹⁰ G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common people, 1746-1946* (London, 1949), p.85.

⁹¹ O. H. Hufton, *The poor of eighteenth-century France 1750-1789* (Oxford, 1974).

⁹² S. King and A. Tomkins (eds.), *The poor in England, 1700-1870: an economy of makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), p.13.

migrants did not lead to overspending of the public purse. As the post war slump and a series of crop failures after 1817 took their toll, increasing numbers of paupers were forced to make claims for relief to avoid the prospect of yet another winter of shortages and hunger.⁹³ The Parish vestry, in their quest to minimise the costs of pauperism, were hard pressed to meet payments of these claims. At the same time in Scotland the depopulation of the Highlands by the great 'clearances' had reached their height causing a steady flow of workers to the south of the country to cross the border into England. By the late 1830s the Irish economy had slid into recession and the dark prospect of life in the workhouse, even if a place in these overcrowded institutions had been available, gave some impetus to those driven to extreme measures to opt for the sea crossing to the Cumberland port of Whitehaven or through Glasgow into southern Scotland. What was unknown to the great majority of migrants were the effects of years of wage depression, unemployment and increased cost of living in England between 1838 and 1841 that awaited them. The long debate on the place of the poor in the development of the new industrial society and the creation of wealth by the new business elite, was now in progress. However in the far north various official reports highlighted the difficulties of the social problems at the time which included: poor housing, sanitation and water supplies, and heavy local unemployment.⁹⁴ Using these criteria the most northern counties of England ranked the bottom of the league in terms of distribution of wealth across the country in 1843.⁹⁵ Industrialisation through the mechanisation of the textile industry; the development of the railways; the construction of the iron and steel smelting furnaces; and the adoption of the powerloom; all had their impact on the prospects and aspirations of the migrants in the far north.

The economy made its adjustments to accommodate these strangers in their midst by absorbing them as the population increased and often, but not always, discarding them when they called on the authorities for relief. Facilities were provided, under a variety of legislation both old and new to control any excess labour thrown on hard times in the form of the workhouse, a euphemism for the paupers' last resort. This thesis will seek to answer the questions set out earlier in the introduction, which focus on the failure of the Poor Law to provide workable solutions for this growing labour force and the men appointed to manage it.

⁹³ J.D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, *The Lake Counties from 1830 to the Mid-twentieth Century: A Study in Regional Change* (Manchester, 1981), pp. 84-6 and Chapter 4.

⁹⁴ 1834 (44), *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*.

⁹⁵ E. J. Buckatzsch, 'The geographical distribution of wealth in England 1086-1843', *Economic History Review*, 3 (1950-1), pp.180-202, in Frank Musgrove, *The North of England, A history from Roman Times to the present* (Oxford, 1990), p.256.

At the same time the press revelled in their escalating readership and pandered to the public appetite for vilification of the alien migrant. Structural reasons, such as periods of unemployment and hardship for the labour force, were finally acknowledged as a major cause of the ebb and flow of the economy. It was the local parishes who bore the brunt of managing the numbers and steering a way over the rocky terrain in this buffer zone to Scotland which served as a point of entry or trans-migration for the Irish and Scots

Chapter 2

Managing the numbers: settlement and removal

2 (i) *The problem of settlement and removal*

Concerns about the removal of Irish paupers from Britain were strikingly captured in a series of letters exchanged in 1819 between the authorities in Belfast and Carlisle. Thomas Verner, Sovereign of Belfast, prominent Orangeman and leader of the ‘great charitable institutions’ in the city, voiced his concern about the condition of the citizens:

monstrous as it appears, these wretched people were, at the discretion of certain magistrates, made prisoners as rogues and vagabonds, after birth and long residence in England – handcuffed as felons – forced on board a vessel with their perishing families – obliged to leave their little necessities behind – landed on the nearest Irish coast, and left to wander in a part of this kingdom to which they were strangers¹.

Evidence of this type may be rare but it cannot be ignored, not least because such images came to occupy a greater role than reality would justify. Moreover, recent research has shown that paupers were returned to Ireland, not only from northern England but from other parts of Britain, and even from the United States.² The threat of removal was no idle one and it was this graphic depiction of lost souls wandering in the kingdom that stirred the committee members of charitable organisations to respond to ‘the pernicious nature of these oppressive acts’³ and write to the Chief Secretary. The victims were characterised and treated as criminals and objects to be rid of rather than families, often, with very young children, who were transported across the Irish Sea to a place unknown to them, without shelter or the most basic means of support. It will be the process and practice of the removal of Irish and Scots poor from the far north that will be the focus of attention of this chapter.

As we saw in the previous chapter the authorities were keen to avoid costs incurred by claims for relief from migrants who could not ‘make ends meet’. How they managed this, in the

¹ 1819 (212), *Copies of Correspondence Between the Chief Secretary of Ireland, the Sovereign of Belfast and others, respecting PAUPERS sent from England to Ireland*, 28 June 1820, p.3.

² Lewis Darwen, Donald M. MacRaid, Brian Gurrin and Liam Kennedy, “‘Unhappy and wretched creatures’’: Charity, poor relief and pauper removal in Britain and Ireland during the Great Famine’, *English Historical Review*, forthcoming 2019. I am grateful to the authors for sharing a pre-published version. Also see for the USA, H. Hirota, *Expelling the poor: Atlantic seaboard states and the 19th-Century origins of American immigration policy* (New York, 2017), ch.5.

³ 1819 (212), *Copies of Correspondence Between the Chief Secretary of Ireland*, p.3.

face of ever increasing numbers of migrants, will be a key component in this chapter. A question that remains unanswered by historians was: were the Irish and Scots poor a significant problem for the authorities in the far north when required to be removed to their place of settlement? The historiography, shows that the problem certainly commanded the attention of the civic leaders and government officials in the northwest and other parts of the country.⁴ This was however a historiography that was overwhelmingly based on urban studies in towns such as Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle, where industry was much more highly developed in more densely populated counties. This chapter provides a more localised picture of these problems in the small towns of the far north by the consideration of the efficacy of ‘passing’ those ordered to be removed; an assessment of the outcome of the authorities’ efforts to maintain control of the situation; and finally, an extension of the historiography by examining the removal methods used by the authorities. The discussions preceding new legislation, in particular settlement and removal, were framed by the famine, mass immigration, poverty and disease.

When the fifth report on settlement and removal by the a Select Committee was published in 1847 they concluded that ‘patching and tampering of the system of settlement’ was a distinctive feature of the administration.⁵ Frank Neal, as one of the leading authorities on Irish migration, came to similar conclusions when he argued that ‘the whole history of the laws of settlement and removal is one of tampering and short-term thinking’⁶. Neal’s data collection and analysis of settlement and removals in Lancashire and Tyneside opened up the debate in the north and other writers broadened his findings to add to the regional dimension of the difficulties that faced migrants in their search for livelihoods.⁷ It was however, the differentiation between

⁴ See: W. A. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire* (New York, 1989); Frank Neal, ‘Irish settlement in the north-east and north-west of England in the mid-nineteenth century’, in P. Buckland and J. Belchem (eds.), *Irish in British Labour History* (1993); C. S. Hallas, ‘Poverty and pragmatism in the northern uplands of England: The North Yorkshire Pennines: c1770-1990’, *Social History*, 25, 1 (2000), pp.67-84; Franca Puddu, ‘The Irish on Tyneside: migration and identity, PhD thesis, Durham University (1997); D. M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration: The Irish in Victorian Britain* (Liverpool, 1998); D. M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1930* (2000); Paul O’Leary, *Immigration and Integration: The Irish in Wales: 1798-1922* (Cardiff, 2000); Roger Swift, ‘Identifying the Irish in Victorian Britain: Recent trends in historiography’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 27, 2-3 (2009), pp.134-151; John A. Burnett, ‘Hail Brither Scots O’ Coaly Tyne’: Networking and Identity among Scottish Migrants in the North-east of England, 1860–2000’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 25 (2007), pp.1-22; Lewis Darwin, Unpublished PhD thesis, ‘Implementing and administering the New Poor Law in the industrial north: a case study of Preston union in regional context, 1837-1861, Nottingham Trent University (2013).

⁵ 1847 (226), *Fifth report of the Select Committee on Settlement and Poor Removal*, Appendix 3, p.44; [see also: Michael Rose, *The English Poor Law, 1780-1930* (Devon, 1971), pp.191-211; S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England, a regional perspective* (Manchester 2000); David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th Century Britain, 1834-1914* (London 1998), pp. 12-18.

⁶ Frank Neal, ‘The English Poor Law, the Irish migrant and the laws of settlement and removal, 1819-1979’, in D. G. Boyce and R. Swift (eds.), *Problems and Perspectives in Irish Historical Society since 1800* (Dublin, 2004).

⁷ D. MacRaild, *The Irish in Britain: 1800-1914* (Dundalgan, 2006); John A. Burnett, Kyle Hughes, Donald M. MacRaild and Smith M., ‘Scottish migrants in the northern Irish sea industrial zone’, 1841–1911: preliminary patterns and perspectives’ *Northern History* (2012), pp.76-97.

the skills of the Scots and the Irish migrants that captured the attention of employers. Scots offered industrialising Britain a regular and replenishing supply of workers and entrepreneurship as a legacy of their practice in Glasgow and Edinburgh, whereas the Irish offered a predominantly unskilled labour force which enabled the execution of the grand ideas of the age. Any restrictions of labour movement in times of economic hardship, particularly for anyone having settlement outside of the parish, discouraged the flow of labour to those parishes where it was needed most. It was the transient nature of the migrant population, as part of this labour force, which identified them and led to the difficulty of recording numbers of inhabitants with any degree of permanence. Numbers could be much bigger than the snapshots provided in census data when taken at specific points in history where seasonal harvests required migrant labour.⁸ Much of the research in the north, which has become the bedrock for subsequent scholars, was carried out by Marshall and Walton who provided clear evidence of the inter and intra-regional movement of migrants and their contribution to the economy.⁹

	England and Wales	Cumberland	Northumberland
1851	17,927,609	196,489	303,568
1861	20,228,497	205,276	343,025

Table 2.1: Population of England and Wales and the counties of the far north.¹⁰

In an insightful analysis, Keith Snell managed to clarify a complex array of opinion and controversy in defining the crucial concepts of settlement and chargeability.¹¹ His contribution focuses on the potential of inhabitants who, once deemed likely to be chargeable, were examined and removed from the parish. This was a perceptive scrutiny of the fear of costs, which were converted into a near certain expenditure on the parish's balance sheet.¹² In many places, the irremovable poor in general, the Irish among them in particular, were treated more harshly than

⁸D. Fitzpatrick, 'A peculiar tramping people: the Irish in Britain, 1801-1870', in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, v (1989), pp.621-659; Audrey Coney, 'Mid-nineteenth-century Ormskirk: Disease, Overcrowding and the Irish in a Lancashire market town', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 139 (1990), pp. 83-111.

⁹ J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, *The Lake Counties* (Manchester, 1981), pp.67-100.

¹⁰ *Census, England and Wales*, 1851, 1861.

¹¹ K. D. M. Snell, 'Pauper settlement and the right to poor relief in England and Wales', *Continuity and Change*, 6, 03 (1991), pp.375-415; see also K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging* (Cambridge, 2006), pp.81-161.

¹² K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p.385; see also: Norma Landau, 'The regulation of Immigration, Economic Structures and definitions of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century England', *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), pp. 541-71.

their settled counterparts.¹³ In the far north out-door relief for migrants was not available unless they had settlement rights. Instead, a bed in the workhouse was offered but with the consequences referred to earlier, but as David Feldman points out, ‘it was not racism that disadvantaged paupers. Inter-county migrants had been ejected from the parish on the basis that they may become a charge’.¹⁴ Perhaps the vulnerability of strangers and outsiders was more evident because they contrasted so strongly with the relative generosity to those who ‘belonged’ to the parish and migrants without tenure rights of settlement fell automatically into this category. For most Scots and Irish migrants, with their history of mobility in the search for employment, ‘non-settlement’ was a spectre lurking in the shadows ready to deal a crushing blow when they were denied relief if proof of five years continuous settlement in the parish could not be provided. This onerous prerequisite would have certainly dissuaded migrants from applying for relief, even if they were in urgent need. Opinions abound when referring to the Irish dependence on the relief system. In the north- west, where the highest concentrations of Irish and Scots were resident, it was argued that ‘only the threat of removal would keep the Irish at bay’ and if the pauper did not go voluntarily after being paid a small sum, then he was made to go.¹⁵ The overseers, men appointed by the parochial elites in town and country, kept a sharp lookout for those who fell into the categories bereft of diligence, economic independence and discipline. These included women without husband but with child, idle and tipting strangers, job-seeking tramps, and all those strangers likely to become chargeable to the parish purse.¹⁶ A further burden the Irish had to bear was the scourge of Typhus (or Irish fever as it was labelled), which emerged at the beginning of 1847 in epidemic proportions. This became not only a refugee crisis but a public health crisis as well as an illegal settlement problem, and the removal of the Irish became, in part, a way of dealing with this.¹⁷

For the Irish, who had a long history of migrational insecurity, any such fears were probably a risk worth taking when considering the prospect of employment at higher wages and the escape from the poverty they had had to endure in their home country. The historian can offer little more than conjecture when attempting to understand the psyche of the migrants as they searched for work and coped with illness or accident which unexpectedly left them

¹³ David Feldman, ‘Immigrants and Welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 13 (2003), p.95.

¹⁴ David Feldman, ‘Immigrants and Welfare, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 13 (2003), p.101.

¹⁵ 1854 (396), *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Removal*, p. 315.

¹⁶ J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics* (Basingstoke, 1994).

¹⁷ *Registrar General’s Ninth Annual Report* (1846), p. xxviii; *Registrar General’s Tenth Annual Report* (1846), pp.297-34.

destitute. These difficulties, and they must have been serious difficulties, were probably considered only when they arose rather than the fear of their possible occurrence. If the poor were fearful of removal, the authorities were equally fearful of the costs of applications for relief. Inevitably, problems associated with repatriation did not end with the sending authorities. Two cases of removals of families from Carlisle illustrate the humanitarian cost of this. First Henry Moran, an Irish ex-militia man and resident of Carlisle for twelve years with his wife and five children:

two men and three other constables entered their house, handcuffed this deponent, and then and there forced this deponent, his wife and children, into a cart, in which they were conveyed to Maryport'. Here they appeared before the Magistrate who refused to order the warrant for removal on the grounds that the children were born in England.

The constables now took the law into their own hands:

under pretence of bringing deponent and his family a second time before the magistrate, forced the deponent and his family to board a brig vessel called Jane of Maryport, Captain Ross, master, in which vessel deponent and his family have been transported to Ireland.¹⁸

This case highlights the sense that the family was to be removed at all costs. The use of handcuffs, applied in the same way as they would have been to a prisoner, were considered appropriate by the authorities but not the committee members. These were widely different approaches to the resolution of the problem of removal of long-term residents. But what was the reaction in Whitehall to the complaints received from Belfast about the Irish in the far north?

The Chief Secretary of Ireland reported:

a considerable proportion of the population of the city consist of Irish families. Many of whom have come over there, more with a view to live upon relief as casual paupers, than to earn a subsistence by labour, and before passing of the Act 59, Geo. III, c. 12, it was estimated in the City of Carlisle and the suburbs, particularly in Caldewgate, from a third to one half of all the poor's rates were expended in the maintenance of the Irish and Scotch families, who had not acquired settlements; and that this serious grievance was meant, amongst other things, to be remedied by the Act.¹⁹

If this was the situation there was indeed some justification for alarm on the part of the Carlisle authorities who went on to say:

The families were removed with every possible attention to their convenience and comfort; and the violence complained of, and the number of constables employed

¹⁸ 1819 (212), *Copies of Correspondence*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁹ 1819 (212), *Copies of Correspondence*, p.6.

were occasioned by their resistance, and raising a mob of radicals to oppose the removal.²⁰

Anxious to allay any fears of inappropriate action by the local leaders, the council defended the constables' actions in an attempt to be seen to have been fair. It is worth noting here that the emphasis was on Irish paupers with no comparison or reference to similar problems with the Scots paupers who would have been carted to the border town of Gretna just eleven miles north of Carlisle.

A few miles east, just over the border in Hawick, the treasurer of the poor fund comments, when speaking of Irish immigrants in the town, in this vivid exposition:

the poverty and wretchedness of these people seems to drive them onto a foreign land as the wrecks buoyant on the ocean are driven on the shore. The piteous tales, famished countenances, emaciated forms and almost naked bodies of these unfortunate beings with children slung on their backs, would mollify the most inhuman heart.²¹

It seems that the views of officials from both sides of the borders took very different positions in their attempts to justify their actions to their public body and the higher authorities. Some clarification was provided ten years later, in the form of a defining statement on settlement written in 1833 by John Shaw for the benefit of those in who had the task of dealing with claims for relief:

Settlement is *that right which* a parishioner becoming impotent or poor has of claiming relief from the funds raised by means of the poor's rate, by virtue of the social relationship or connection which subsists between him and the other members of the parish. This right is always acquired in that parish or place in which parishioners have acquired their last legal settlement.²²

This was an important clarification for the Irish and Scots who wandered abroad in their search for work and were specifically excluded from the parish and its potential benefits, unless they had lived continuously in the same parish for five years and, most importantly, that they could prove it. However, a question arises: did the term 'unsettled' undermine the mobility of the Irish and Scots labour by acting as a deterrent to those who were attracted by the prospect of a better life? Given the history of migration of the Irish since the late eighteenth century, the hazardous journey and the prospect of 'unsettled' status appears to have been no deterrent whatsoever for seasonal harvest workers. However, when the climate changed to one of 'move or starve', as it did in November 1846 when the spectre of famine and starvation became a real possibility, the

²⁰ 1819 (212), *Copies of Correspondence*, p.7.

²¹ R. Wilson, *A sketch of the history of Hawick, 1825*, pp.286-88.

²² J. Shaw, *The parochial lawyer; or churchwarden and overseer's guide and assistant* (1833), p.178.

journey became a matter of survival rather than expedience. Thus, for the tens of thousands who made their way to the shores of Britain fleeing the Irish famine, the idea that they would have been refused relief on the grounds of their ‘non-settled’ status, must have been far from their minds. With workhouses filled to capacity in Ireland and public charity incapable of providing for such numbers, the word was no doubt circulated that the English system had more to offer in such troubled times. For migrants on their way to the far north, the law’s significance for the mobility of labour and its relationship to vagrancy and potential destitution was not an issue. What was an issue was captured by the illegitimate son of an itinerant beggar, James Dawson Burns, who must have spoken for many paupers when he wrote, ‘I was carried headlong into a stream of unbending circumstances and like a chip of wood amid the boisterous waves of a stormy sea, was carried hither and thither without any controlling power of my own.’²³ This powerlessness and inherent disadvantage as a stranger, some would even say a ‘foreigner’, is crucial in understanding the lives and place of the Irish and Scots pauper. As an accidental ingredient of the old and the new poor law it would prove to be as problematic for the authorities as the migrants themselves. Their prime objective was to obtain a sufficiency of food and shelter and the freedom to travel to towns where job prospects were potentially lifesaving. As this chapter will verify, the Irish-born and Scots-born in the far north represented relatively small numbers, even though they were proportionately similar to the north-west. However, this was a factor lost in the hyperbole of press articles and government reports which laid more emphasis on the effects of the influx of the ‘outsider’ the ‘foreigner’ and the ‘in-comer’.²⁴ Most of all however, was the concern that was generated by the year on year prospect of ever-growing numbers of migrants (with some justification when considering the figures in Tables 2.2 and 2.3), which would add to the drain on the rate payers’ purse, with little attention to the root cause of migration into the region.

	England & Wales	%	Cumberland	%	Northumberland	%
1841	281,236	1.8	4,881	3.0	5,218	2.1
1851	519,959	2.9	9,866	5.1	12,666	4.2
1861	601,634	3.0	10,529	5.1	15,034	4.4
1871	544,533	2.6	11,870	5.4	14,506	3.8

Table 2.2: Irish-born population in Cumberland and Northumberland.²⁵

²³ James Dawson Burns, *The Autobiography of a Beggar Boy* (London, 1855, repr.1978), p.173.

²⁴ M. W. Williams, *The sociology of an English village* (London, 1956), p.168.

²⁵ *Census of England and Wales, 1841-71, Population Tables, Part I and II, Report of England and Wales*, I-XI.

	Scots-born in England & Wales	% of whole population	Scots-born in Cumb'd	% of Cumb'd	Scots- born in North'd	% of North'd
1851	130,087	0.6	7,443	3.8	16,325	5.4
1861	169,202	0.8	9,025	4.4	18,461	5.4

Table 2.3: Scots-Born population in Cumberland and Northumberland.²⁶

As legislation was being put in place to provide for the poor in England and Wales reports were being circulated by the press in the far north and elsewhere. Mr. Scott, assistant overseer of the parish of Penrith wrote:

if the same system of management which now prevails were to be continued, the evils which he forebodes from giving birth-settlements might be as great as the anticipated poor laws and Carlisle and other of what may be called the frontier towns, will be subjected to "inundations" of Irish paupers, who will come here to give birth to their offspring and thereby obtain settlements for them. This is an evil which must be guarded against.²⁷

This fear, justified or not, underpinned the authorities' attitude and approach in towns such as Carlisle and Whitehaven in much the same way as it did in Liverpool where Irish and Scots migrants assembled for removal to their legal place of settlement.

2 (ii) *Settlement law, implementation and impact*

Recent work by Snell has brought some clarity to the laws of settlement. He submitted a crucial concept which underpinned the law for the poor as 'their right to poor relief, to a place, their safeguard, the essence of belonging.'²⁸ 'Belonging to a parish' was as much a legal term as a reference to personal identity in this context and not a privilege extended to the Irish and Scots unless they could prove extended residence in one place. This 'belonging', in the form of 'settlement', was seen also as a 'return ticket' of last resort for migrants far from home; a safeguard against vagrant wretchedness if all else failed, at times openly used as such by the Irish in the far north.²⁹ In this sense, it probably provided some vague reassurance for those itinerants tramping across the region in their search for work.

²⁶ *Census of England and Wales, 1841-7, Population Tables.*

²⁷ *Carlisle Journal*, 17 May 1834.

²⁸ K. D. M. Snell, 'Pauper settlement and the right to poor relief in England and Wales', *Continuity and Change*, 6, 3 (1991), p.401.

²⁹ A. L. Beier, *Masterless men: Vagrancy Problem in Britain, 1560-1640* (London, 1985), p.173.

The English had been removed in the previous century from Cumberland on many occasions as records demonstrate,³⁰ but the earliest evidence of a Removal Order for an Irish person was issued at the 1820 Easter Quarter Sessions for Henry Gilesby an Irish man who lived in Wigton and was ordered to be conveyed to Maryport for removal to Ireland.³¹ It is difficult to determine whether the scarcity of early records of removal orders in the west of region indicated so few removals or that they have not survived. Whatever the reason, care should be taken here not to presume that very few orders for removal actually took place. Forced and voluntary removals as referred to earlier could have been far more frequent than the records indicated.

Two more removals, both taken out against women, were ordered the following year. They were: Elizabeth Welsh, deserted by her husband and removed with her four children to Kendal (her place of settlement prior to marriage), and Jane Flood, also deserted by an Irish man who was removed from Carlisle to Bentham in Westmorland. Claims for relief by deserted wives of Irish men meant the parish was forced to decide whether to pay the family a weekly allowance and invoke the disapproval of the rate-payers, or apply the law and remove them. The removal option was elected as the most pragmatic, a decision based on the legal obligations as well as the financial benefits. A further case is worth looking at in more detail. An official 'pass', a document issued which allowed passage from county to county to the border town of removal was issued by two magistrates on 7 August 1821 for the removal of Elizabeth Rafferty and William Rafferty and their two children aged 12 years and 9 years. It was served in the following statement:

To be conveyed to Maryport in Cumberland and delivered to the constables and other officers in Maryport with this 'pass', and to apply to the Justices of the Peace in the town for a warrant to the Master of any ship or vessel bound to Ireland to take on board the ship and convey them to such place in Ireland as such ship shall be bound.³²

An examination of William Rafferty in the same year under oath reveals:

Says born [*as he is understood*] in Co. Down in Ireland until about 9 years of age, came to Carrock Mill in Scotland for 3 years, enlisted in the 1st Battalion of the 1st Regiment of the foot, discharged 21 years since, went to Ireland for 3 or 4 months then to Scotland. Applied for relief as his trade as a weaver did not support him. Never rented or farmed a tenement of £10 a year nor gained any settlement in England.³³

³⁰ CRO, Quarter Sessions Q/11, (1778), pp. 22-23.

³¹ CRO, Q11, 1821, *Quarter Sessions, Warrants for Removals, Michaelmas Petitions*.

³² CRO, Q11, 1821, *Michaelmas Petitions*.

³³ CRO, Q11, 1821, *Michaelmas Petitions*.

Without settlement rights this family was ordered to be removed to William Rafferty's birth-place in Ireland. The fact that he had spent several years in the England and served the crown as a faithful soldier for twenty-one years was evidently of no account in the judgement of his case. *The Times* witnessed cases of such transportation and reported with a degree of sympathy for those subjected to this upheaval:

I frequently see Irish paupers - men, women and children – passed through the county (Staffordshire). They are conveyed in open carts; and as they go, as I am informed, the whole length of the county, more than 40 miles, in the day, these poor creatures, ill clad, and all degrees of infirmity, from disease and old age, and childhood, are often exposed from 4 o'clock in the morning till night, to wet and cold with little intermission.³⁴

There is an air of sympathy here for the plight of the paupers, but nothing that suggested a call for a change to the principle that they were to be removed to their place of birth however how long they had been resident and employed in the county. This argument was clearly supported by the fear that the 'hordes of migrants' were, in all probability, likely to cause a social crisis if strict enforcement of the law was not adhered to. The expectation of the ratepayer was that the parish would do all in its power to avoid any charges and maintain control of this transient migrant stream.³⁵ This principle of Poor Law management and enforcement came to symbolise for rate payers the essence of responsibility for pauper and vagrancy costs. Without forty days residence, as either a tenant of £10 per annum or a native of the parish; an apprentice bonded to an employer or a servant, householder or sojourner, then no relief was to be provided.³⁶ Whether they were dealt with in situ, or removed to other places, the costs incurred by the ratepayer threatened to escalate and the associated anxiety of being unable to meet the costs remained. It was these factors that were at the heart of a series of parliamentary enquiries on poor relief and vagrancy that were to be the focus of legislation in the following decades.³⁷

The legislators realised that longer term residency suggested a degree of stability, if not permanence in the life of the migrant. Crucially, the 1819 Settlement of the Poor Act allowed settlement 'to be gained by residence after three years' and the Justices of the Peace were given

³⁴ *The Times*, 18 Dec 1829.

³⁵ Audrey Eccles, *The eighteenth-century vagrancy contractor* (Surrey, 2012), p.48.

³⁶ *Settlement Act, 1662: 13 & 14 Charles II, c.12* ['sojourner' was a commonly used term for 'a registered outsider, resident amongst us. They were immune from removal until actually chargeable, but separated from others insofar as they did not belong to the parish. They clearly belonged to another named parish or township, being 'floaters', 'out-township poor' or 'out-parishioners' from those places, they were seen as such', in K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging* (Cambridge, 2006), p.101].

³⁷ F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor Together with Parochial Reports* (1797, repr., 1966); Rev. D. Davies, *The case of Labourers in Husbandry, Stated and Considered* (1795).

the authority to order the removal of anyone claiming relief who did not meet this condition.³⁸ Realistically the Irish and Scots migrants were least likely to comply and the process of removal, after settlement had been denied, was not straight forward and open to abuse. One of the problems for the authorities was to distinguish a true from a false claim of settlement. When a claimant was intent on travelling from one end of the country to another, or even into Scotland *en route* to their place of settlement, there was always the possibility that a claim for relief would result in a 'pass' being issued to convey the person to their destination at public expense. The *Scotsman* had reported that 'the Irish were spreading like locusts over the whole surface of the country and turning to begging where no employment was available'.³⁹ Reports such as these played their part in generating the drive for the need to clarify the law to prevent the apparently easy conveyance of persons around the country. As the trickle of immigrants developed into a deluge the demand for the removal of individuals without work or settlement was imperative.

To capture some measure of the mood of the authorities on this theme two cases from 1829 illustrate the point. The first from the small hamlet of Hesket some nine miles south of Carlisle:

The parish of Hesket appealed against a removal, to the parish of St. Cuthbert, of the wife and three children of a man named Shearin, an Irishman, residing in Botchergate [*Carlisle*], as having been done without his consent. – The order of removal was confirmed.

Another, this time from the parish of Walton, eleven miles north east of Carlisle:

An appeal by the parish of Walton, against the maintenance of an old man, who was born in Germany of Scotch parents, and came over to England as a soldier with the Duke of Cumberland in 1745. The court confirmed that he should derive his maintenance for the remainder of his days from the parish of Walton.⁴⁰

These two cases, and others referred to earlier, demonstrate how the mood of the court could decide on the basis of *prima facie* evidence. The first person was removed and the second was allowed to remain. The woman's appeal to remain in her home was rejected in favour of removing her to another Carlisle parish after considering the illegal settlement of her husband. The appeal of the old Scotch soldier was allowed, presumably on the grounds of his long residence and loyal army service with the Duke of Cumberland fighting for king and country which, if his story was true, made him a very old man indeed. His patriotism, a highly praised attribute in 1827, could have served to demonstrate that he was a 'deserving' case and overcame

³⁸ 1819 (553-554), *Settlement of the Poor Act*.

³⁹ *Scotsman*, August 1827.

⁴⁰ *Carlisle Patriot*, 24 October 1829.

any fear that the poor law union may have had of long term cost responsibility, whilst the wife of an illegally settled husband was not.

Two government reports referred to earlier have a direct bearing on the Irish poor in the region, one in 1821 and the other in 1834.⁴¹ These were crucial in forming attitudes and methodology in managing Irish and Scots migrants. The influence of George Chetwynd and George Cornwall Lewis in their respective enquiries, referred to in the previous chapter, set the tone for the years that followed their publication. There was no shortage of witnesses who were willing to testify to the vagaries of the poor. 'It is only by giving them a voyage to Ireland that they may have another back', was an underlying grumble of poor law officials.⁴² But there were also some who spoke in different terms. When providing evidence for the inquiry, John Christian, a Cumberland magistrate and key witness to the pauper condition in the far north, showed a measure of sympathy for English families of Irish paupers in his court room:

We have not a great number of vagrants in our neighbourhood except for Irish vagrants. Great numbers come from Carlisle, some from Cockermouth and some from Wigton. I am satisfied that the transmission [removal] by statute is attended by great stress and cruelty to individuals and families. An English wife and children born in England of an Irish pauper, having himself no settlement in England, are liable to be removed with him when he becomes chargeable to the parish though the English wife has settlement she must go with him. Her settlement after marriage being suspended. They are all compelled to go.⁴³

The magistrate in this case is not inclined to follow the letter of the law, and displayed his disquiet with the current general practice and the hardship imposed on women whose rights were over-ruled when their husbands claimed relief. The suspension of identity for the English woman when she married would inevitably have generated a deep sense of insecurity for those women who married an Irish or Scots man. Steven King demonstrated how the justices changed the law, in some cases by the manner in which they applied it, in order to seek a fairer outcome for the accused.⁴⁴ Whether John Christian's sympathy is misplaced or not, deserted wives of Irish husbands who claimed relief would probably have experienced an acute state of insecurity. In Whitehaven, the removal of paupers took a different turn:

The chair [of the Board of Guardians] said that, by the new act [1834 Poor Law Amendment Act] relating to the removal of Scotch and Irish vagrants it was necessary to agree on certain rules and regulations as to the legal mode of passing them which he submitted and the committee adopted them. The Irish paupers are to be passed to the care of the Keeper of the House of Correction at Whitehaven,

⁴¹ 1821 (543), *Report of the Select Committee on the Existing Laws Relating to Vagrants* (Chairman, George Chetwynd); 1835, *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain* (Chairman, George Cornwall Lewis).

⁴² 1821 (543), *Report of the Select Committee*, p. 57.

⁴³ 1821 (543), *Report of the Select Committee*, pp.55-6.

⁴⁴ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 37-38.

who is to deliver them to the captains of the Irish vessels, to be conveyed at 5s a-head.⁴⁵

This mixing of terms in committee resolutions: 'Scotch and Irish vagrants' with 'Irish paupers', as though they were simply interchangeable, was unhelpful, certainly for the magistrate having to deal with the applications for warrants. This introduced a new element into the debate, that of criminality, which must have reinforced the public's fear that the issue was extremely serious. The Irish paupers were classified as criminals, if not explicitly, by being passed into the care of the keeper of the House of Correction prior to shipment to Ireland. In today's terminology, they were 'put on remand pending deportation', before being returned to their place of settlement. The cost was made clear at five shillings a head (c£300 current value), which provides some idea of the financial liability to the ratepayer. Note that once again there is no reference to Scots paupers who were evidently in the area at the time. A system was thus established and adopted by the committee which was clearly outside the central authorities, pursued with an almost independent right to exercise a form of parochial legalism.

As the cornerstone of the relief system the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was the most important and far reaching piece of legislation when discussing the rights to settlement and removal of claimants. The concept of settlement had by this time been developed and established on a range of criteria, tried and tested over decades with some degree of success. Even if it was inconsistent, it broadly embraced the defined aspects of: place of birth; marriage to a man with settlement; parochial apprenticeship agreement; renting a tenement; paying rates or owning property in a parish. These conditions were the determinants and differences between making ends meet and destitution for the migrants. So far as the Irish and Scots were concerned, only one of these aspects applied in the great majority of cases - place of birth. This was a difficult condition to define as it could not be assumed that the designated destination on the removal order was the actual place of birth of the claimant. It was sometimes determined on the basis of a parent's parish of settlement or even a grandparent's settlement.⁴⁶ Whatever the judgment of the magistrates, the crux of the policy, which embraced the above criteria was 'not to keep the pauper alive but to penalise him or her for falling short in their duty to maintain a civilised lifestyle and creating a moral hazard for the government by the costs arising from such behavioural deviance'.⁴⁷ The Guardians of Berwick-upon-Tweed poor law union were so intent on diverting costs elsewhere that they actively pursued the possibility of transferring pauper

⁴⁵ *Carlisle Patriot*, 12 April 1834.

⁴⁶ J. S. Taylor, *Poverty, Migration and Settlement in the Industrial Revolution: Sojourners* (Paolo Alto, 1989), p.47.

⁴⁷ Peter Gray, 'Shovelling out your paupers: The British state and Irish famine migration 1846-50', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 33, 4 (1999), p.56.

lunatics from the Berwick asylum to an institution in Edinburgh. This received a short note from the Poor Law Commissioners who said, 'there is no way in which the Board of Guardians would have powers to do this under the 29th of 2nd and 3rd William IV c.107'.⁴⁸ If ever there were reasons for fear of the problem of the 'contagion of moral hazards and deviance', then the above cases demonstrated it. But there also appeared to have been attempts by some guardians to exercise a degree of sympathy, which seeped into the decision-making process to offer a humane solution.

Ten years later, ignorant of the impending human catastrophe in Ireland and the highlands of Scotland, further legislation to consolidate settlement and removal of the poor was passed to alleviate the demands on the rate payers' purse. For the Irish and Scots pauper, the 1846 Act was clear: they would be removed to their places of birth if they became chargeable to the parish.⁴⁹ This was the piece of legislation that introduced the idea of irremovable status after five years residence in the same parish, which suggested a hardening of the approach to the pauper problem by extending the existing three-year residence condition and consequently reduced the number of claimants. Under this legislation there was still no right of settlement that provided entitlement to relief when moving from parish to parish. Irremovable status was valid only in the parish where the five-year period of residence was established. The number of migrants who would have been able to maintain a place of residence alongside their employment for this relatively long period during the 1830s and 1840s, through the ebb and flow of the industrial economy, is largely unknown. Some research on this subject has been undertaken by Nigel Goose and E. A. Wrigley who established that it was the mobility of the migrant, as an essential characteristic of their employability, that marked the probability of long-term residence as highly unlikely.⁵⁰ One exemption built into the Act indicated a measure of understanding of the circumstances of the family of 'mixed marriages' (English/Irish and English/Scots), which stated that there would be no removal of married women, children, widows and the sick, who were all allowed a measure of relief for a limited period. It did not confer rights of settlement on the person but it did allow claims for relief by all paupers provided they had been resident in the parish for a continuous period of five years without making any previous claims.⁵¹ Disputing

⁴⁸ TNA, MH12/8977, 31 August 1841.

⁴⁹ 1846 (526), *A bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the removal of the poor*, pp.1-3.

⁵⁰ Nigel Goose, *Population and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851* (Hertfordshire, 1996); E. A. Wrigley, *Nineteenth-century society: essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of societal data* (1971).

⁵¹ D. Ashforth, 'Settlement and removal in urban areas: Bradford, 1834-71' in M. E. Rose (ed.), *The poor and the city: the English Poor Law in its urban context, 1834-1914* (1985), pp.57-88; Snell, *Parish and Belonging* (2006), pp.81-86.

a claim to five years residency however was difficult for the authorities and something they had overlooked when the Bill was drafted. Knowing the mobility of migrants, one can also imagine how easy it would have been to simply ‘move on’ to avoid a summons being served, which could have distorted the recorded levels of destitution by omitting them from the count.

As the famine tightened its grip in Ireland the Liverpool authorities were actively removing as many Irish migrants as they could, legally or otherwise. Reports in the town’s newspapers succeeded in feeding the editors of the far north with column inches in their editions, which was sufficient to stir the imagination of the readers with possibilities of consequences similar to those in the larger coastal towns further south. This resulted in an almost inquisitorial hunting of potential victims in order to serve the summons for the removal process to be initiated. For example, in Carlisle there were several Irish paupers brought before the magistrates who were under orders of the Guardians to be removed back to Ireland and these were reported in several local newspapers.⁵² One such report was of a man who had lived for 33 years in Carlisle, and had brought up a family without being given relief on more than one occasion previously. There would be good reason to assume that after having been resident within the country for such a length of time his right to settlement would have been established, but the law did not allow this. Some parishes had made reciprocal arrangements whereby the overseers of the parish provided relief to those whose legal settlement was established in adjacent parishes and any costs were eventually reimbursed by the parish of legal settlement. Under this arrangement the legal requirement of removal to the ‘settlement parish’ was, in practical terms, fulfilled without the costs and administrative paperwork required for removal of the applicant. This rarely applied to the migrant, whose parish of settlement in Ireland or Scotland was extremely unlikely to accept responsibility for one of their citizens in another ‘country’. The Carlisle resident, after living for 33 years in the city, was not quite sure what part of Ireland he belonged to, but he thought it was Dromore, and he declined before the magistrates to sign the Removal Order. This was a courageous gesture on his part, and could have resulted in his imprisonment, but the magistrates, who seemed to feel his distress, ‘refused to interfere in the matter’.⁵³ They evidently saw the case through different eyes to those of the Guardians, and allowed him to remain in the town. This approach was mirrored in the east of the region, which recorded a removal order by the magistrates in Newcastle of James Marjee, an Irish man after some equally lengthy thirty-three years of residence. His case was not considered quite so

⁵² *Carlisle Patriot*, 19 February 1847.

⁵³ *Carlisle Patriot*, 19 February 1847.

sympathetically and he was removed to Belfast after being conveyed across the region to Port Carlisle.⁵⁴ These cases generated costs and controversy for the Guardians who countered this by relentlessly pursuing reimbursement. The controversy was still alive seven years later when John Francis Maguire, editor of the *Cork Examiner*, member of the Select Committee and a committed abolitionist of the ‘monstrous’ laws of settlement, interrogated poor law officials on their removal practices.⁵⁵ He was particularly scathing about the removal of persons, such as those in the above examples, who had been living in Britain for many years, even decades, without being allowed the right of settlement. His voice, and others, provided the necessary focus for the debate on costs incurred for such practices.

2 (iii) *Driving down costs.*

When the ‘Accounts of the Sums’ in the report referred to earlier leapt from £225 per year to £872 per year the guardians, the press and the public began to question why.⁵⁶ The local and national newspapers were groaning about the implications of this ‘ill thought out’ legislation and the way it was intended to deal with vagrants. Since casual relief usually meant relief for vagrants, and vagrants were frequently associated with the Irish both in the newspapers and the pamphlets of the day, the fears of the public were easily aroused. It seemed the cost of removals in 1830 had become more urgent and the ‘immense sums of casual relief’ were presumably more acceptable than ‘the great cost of removal’.⁵⁷ What the public made of this choice between similar financial consequences is difficult to say. The imperative which the authorities were now anxious to address was the reimbursement of costs of those ordered to be removed.

Some basic statistics provide a broad picture from which to begin comparing the different groups, bearing in mind that only those that were officially removed can be accounted for. Evidently this took no measure of those who were actually removed either voluntarily or by force as referred to earlier in the chapter. The Scots and Irish were present in all the small towns though the Scots dominated the border towns of Carlisle and Berwick-upon Tweed and the Irish were more numerous in the industrial towns and hamlets of the region’s western and eastern edges such as Whitehaven and Tynemouth. To put this into a wider urban context the Irish born in London recorded 4.5% of the population in 1851, which was around the same proportion as in the far north (Table: 2.2) The scale and comparison of these basic figures provide some early

⁵⁴ TWA, PU.NC/4/7/1-3, 3 April 1849, Removal orders and warrants for removals [Appendix, Figure: 2.2].

⁵⁵ J. F. Maguire, *Removal of Irish poor from England and Scotland showing the nature of the law of removal and the necessity for it* (London, 1854), pp.5-6.

⁵⁶ 1821 (543), *Report of the Select Committee*, p.74.

⁵⁷ *Carlisle Patriot*, 19 February 1847.

justification for examining the costs of both immigrant groups. Postgate and Cole's survey of Poor Law expenditure in England and Wales at the commencement of the New Poor Law showed spending in the far north at five shillings per head of population to have been at the next to lowest level after Lancashire. He shows the two counties as spending roughly equal amounts in 1834. By 1848 there was a considerable difference with Northumberland spending 24% more than Cumberland (Table 2.4)

Northumberland Poor Law Unions	Amount expended on the poor	Cumberland Poor Law Unions	Amount expended on the poor
Alnwick	6,502	Longtown	3,159
Berwick	7,482	Carlisle	11,182
Glendale	4,263	Brampton	211
Belford	2,701	Penrith	5,361
Rothbury	2,184	Cockermouth	9,224
Morpeth	4,327	Whitehaven	6,803
Bellingham	2,583	Bootle	1,324
Castle Ward	3,975	Wigton	4,192
Hexham	8,118	Alston and Garrigill	1,241
Haltwhistle	993		
Tynemouth	13,360		
Total	56,488	Total	42,697

Table 2.4: Amount expended by all Poor Law Unions in Cumberland and Northumberland, 1848.⁵⁸

The power of removal came initially from the Boards of Guardians who attended to claims for relief and made preliminary decisions about who should be removed prior to their appearance before a magistrate, which in Boyer's words was 'an important weapon in the armoury of local officials'.⁵⁹ Whilst he may be correct, there were other factors which could equally have made the option less attractive for officials seeking to remove Irish or Scots. Reimbursement of expenditure was not straight forward and created problems when computing

⁵⁸ 1849 (1024), *Report of the Commissioners for Relief of the Poor*, pp. 36-53.

⁵⁹ G. Boyer, *An economic history of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850* (1990), p.257.

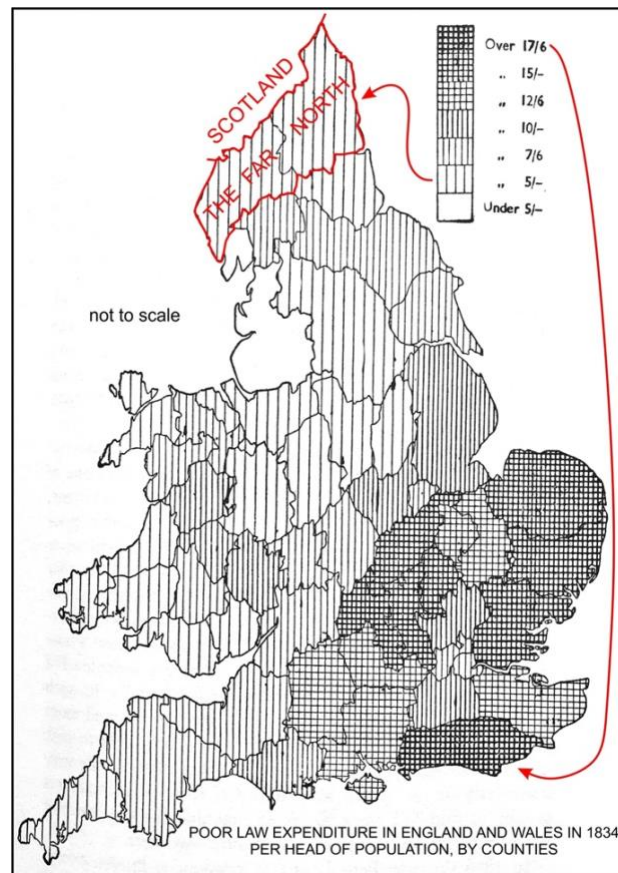


Figure 2.1⁶⁰

the exact costs of removals to Ireland and could lead to delay and contention of the sums claimed. On the other hand, recovering costs from parishes in Scotland did not have the same problems for the removing union in England because: there were no shipping lines involved nor ship masters' decisions to be taken into account; the overland contractor was totally responsible for delivery to the destination on the order; there were two border crossings with no flexibility of routes; and the Scottish authorities were more acquiescent, which could have been due, in part, to a less turbulent history of relationships between the two countries.

For some comparison of the weight of costs in the far north during the fifty year period up to the onset of the famine (1795-1846), there were 538 English paupers, seven Irish and one Scot removed to other parishes from Carlisle.⁶¹ In 1841 Cumberland and Northumberland had overall costs of removal of £399 and £3019 respectively of which the Irish and Scots removal costs amounted to just £17 total.⁶² Removal of English nationals to Union districts outside

⁶⁰ Base map from G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People*, (Fakenham, 1961), p.274.

⁶¹ CRO, Q11, Folders containing: *Easter, Midsummer, Michaelmas and Christmas, Quarter petitions, and other correspondence*; CQ4/2, CQ4/3, *Conviction Books*.

⁶² 1842 (389), *Eighth Annual Report of Poor Law Commission*, p.25.

Cumberland and Northumberland were in the overwhelming majority. Towns like Cockermouth and Whitehaven in Cumberland had spent relatively small sums on removal of the Irish and Scots in 1841-2, which amounted to £80 (12% of total) for Irish paupers, and £42 (2.1% of total) for Scots paupers.⁶³

	Non-settled paupers (£) (limited rights to relief widows for first year)	Irremovable Paupers (£) (having settlement under the 1846 Act)	Amount expended on all paupers (£)	Total
1848	235			235
1849	199		9,224	199
1850	324	1,344		1,668
1851	302	1,263		1,565
1852	265	1,331		1,497
1853	229	1283		1,512

Table 2.5: Costs of non-settled, irremovable and paupers in Cockermouth Union, 1848-1853.⁶⁴

South of the county in the Lancaster Union district the same area of expenditure amounted to £1,197.⁶⁵ These sums for the far north were remarkably small, even in contemporary terms, but this could now be expected to increase as the potato blight struck at the heart of Irish livelihoods and drove many to leave their homes and make their way to Britain. after 1846 through the main ports of Liverpool, Bristol and Glasgow (Table 2.5).

In the following year (1847), costs began to rise as increasing numbers were issued with their passes back to Ireland and Scotland (Tables 2.6 and 2.7).⁶⁶ Of the many thousands removed in the period from 1846 to 1849, 781 were removed from the far north. Of these 52 were Irish (6%) and 21 were Scots (3%), again a very small proportion, but even in these figures the Irish outnumber the Scots by two to one.

⁶³ 1842 (389), *Eighth Annual Report of Poor Law Commission*, p.50.

⁶⁴ CRO, SPUCO/3/1/2A, Whitehaven.

⁶⁵ 1842 (389), *Eighth Annual Report of Poor Law Commission*, p.25.

⁶⁶ 1850 (1152), *Reports to the Poor Law Board on Laws of Settlement and Removal of the Poor, Abstract of Orders of Removals*, pp. 2, 7.

Poor Law Union	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854
Liverpool	6,964	9,095	8,327	7,125	5,043	4,545
London	2,163	2,197	897	1,223	1,252	1,693
Bristol	93	111	68	29	54	78
Newport	-	15	24	49	66	34
Cardiff	134	96	9	47	42	42
Swansea	16	23	2	6	4	8
Whitehaven	-	0	1	4	8	-

Table 2.6: Number of Irish removed from Poor Law Unions in Britain, 1849-54.⁶⁷

	1846		1847		1848		1849		Totals	
	Irish	Scots	Irish	Scots	Irish	Scots	Irish	Scots	Irish	Scots
Cumb'd	6	5	16	2	2	1	5	4	29	12
Total	32		48		19		49		176	
North'd	2	1	4	2	11	4	6	2	23	9
Total	96		85		115		177		605	

Table 2.7: Numbers of Orders of Removal from Cumberland and Northumberland granted by Justices of the Peace in England and Wales 1846-1849.⁶⁸

The continued state of unease generated by the famine inevitably made demands on the authorities to provide facts and opinion for the government. This resulted in the production of no less than eight Select Committee Reports and five command papers in 1847, a remarkable bureaucratic achievement, which suggests a sense of panic in its degree of enthusiasm perhaps driven in part by the Andover workhouse scandal in 1845.⁶⁹

It was against this background of increasing pressure to find space for paupers that a clear exposition of conditions in the workhouse was set out by members of a Select Committee.

⁶⁷ 1854 (488), LV 325, *Return on the number of paupers removed to Ireland in the year ending 25 March 1849, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1853, 1854, from the parishes within the Metropolitan District of the Registrar General and from Liverpool, Bristol, Newport (Monmouthshire), Cardiff, Swansea, Whitehaven and Tynemouth.*

⁶⁸ 1850 (1152), *Reports to the Poor Law Board on Laws of Settlement and Removal of the Poor*, p. 2.

⁶⁹ P. Higginbotham, *Workhouse Encyclopaedia* (Stroud, 2012), p.237. [One of the most notorious scandals that inflamed the debate occurred in 1845 when inmates of the Andover workhouse were so hungry that they were fighting over rotting meat and marrow left on animal bones. The Poor Law Commissioners mishandling of the affair sealed their fate after the failure of their enquiries led to the establishment of the new Poor Law Board in 1848.]

They were guided by the statement of Charles Buller who upheld that the conditions a pauper could expect to find inside the workhouse should be no better than the poor could expect outside of the institutions.⁷⁰ This was reported in an extensive seven volume transcript which, it could be argued, condemned the nature of the existing law of settlement by attempting to free up the labour market under a cloud of sympathy for the poor:

A more oppressive and impolitic law never existed anywhere – it made crime of poverty and its penalty banishment - it was at once cruel and unjust and as injurious to the community as it was to the individual.⁷¹

For the pauper under the threat of removal this statement must have been manna from heaven. However, they were disappointed when Ralph Carr, a Northumberland magistrate, testified in terms which were first addressed to English labourers then to Irish labourers. He viewed the law of removal as ‘one that requires attention as regards humanity to the poor’,⁷² but maintained it was ‘quite necessary to retain the power of removal for the Irish’.⁷³ Where was the rational justification for this approach given the level of the costs outlined above in his sphere of influence? One explanation could have been the easy scapegoating of the Irish, stereotyped and vilified in the press for so long, who provided targets for the authorities in their bid to make savings for the ratepayers. Another could have been the fear among local leaders that if the option to remove the Irish was stopped, the Poor Law would be responsible for their maintenance and large numbers would come to England in the hope of support. This gave some credence to the hypothesis that Irish paupers were removed to their places of settlement more readily than Scots or English paupers who were considered less of a liability. Carr went on to say that ‘the Act has had very little effect, either injuriously or otherwise, on the county of Northumberland’. The term ‘otherwise’ probably meant the low level of costs incurred. In the same report one witness took a more conciliatory tone when he tried to get inside the skin of the labourer, whether Irish, Scotch or English, and said with some empathy:

The poor man cannot be in a better position than to be free to go and free to remain wherever he pleases...having the certainty that, if overtaken by sickness and misfortune, bringing with it destitution, he has there a legal right to relief without fear of being treated as a stranger or interloper.

And in an effort to come even closer to the heart of the poor he said:

⁷⁰ 1849 (1024), *First Report of the Poor Law Board*, p.8.

⁷¹ 1847 (518), *Select Committee Enquiry into the Operation of the Law of Settlement and Poor Removal Act, seventh and eighth Reports, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and index*, pp.209-11.

⁷² 1847 (518), *Select Committee Enquiry*, Q7187.

⁷³ 1847 (518), *Select Committee Enquiry*, Q7908.

The term parish has now an ill-omened sound to the poor man's ear. It carries with it no pleasurable or inspiring associations. "To come upon the parish"! Whilst there he knows his lot, however miserable; if he goes away he knows not what will happen to him. The law has settled him there, and there he will remain.⁷⁴

This was a rare example of how the concept of removability was addressed in universal terms rather than seeking to brand the Irish, and also pointing specifically at the fears of the individual as a 'stranger' in a foreign land 'thrown upon the parish'.⁷⁵ By 1852, bearing in mind this was in the period immediately after the famine crisis, tens of thousands of removals were still being implemented across the country.⁷⁶

Two reports measured on the one hand the desperation of the Board of Guardians, and on the other hand bewilderment, when they had to deal with a problem which they found so intractable:

The question of removal of an Irish unmarried female pauper who belonged to Drogheda was raised at the meeting of the Board of Guardians [Carlisle]. The Clerk remarked that the removal of Irish and Scotch paupers now rested with the Guardians but it was a question of whether it was worth while attempting the removal of the pauper spoken of, as it would cost more money than keeping her for a few weeks would do. Mr. Wilson said it was not the cost of removing her that he spoke of, so much as that of bringing witnesses from Drogheda to ascertain and prove her settlement. The subject was then dropped.⁷⁷

The removal of this woman was on balance too expensive when compared with the costs of acquiring proof of settlement required under the law, particularly if the period of time required to maintain her was a matter of months rather than weeks. There was always the possibility that the woman would have been allowed to remain, effectively giving her the right of settlement, an even greater burden for the ratepayer to bear. Perhaps more importantly, if the mood of the Guardians was to be measured, was the underlying determination to be rid of the woman on the basis that she could become a major liability. The fear of the establishment of a precedent must have weighed heavily on their decision. With no reference in the report to her circumstances there was instead a clinical analysis of how the ratepayer would be affected financially by any potential future costs.

⁷⁴ 1847 (518), *Select Committee Enquiry*, Appendix 3, p.4.

⁷⁵ Being 'thrown upon the parish' was a phrase used to underline the highest level of deprivation and its associated shame for the applicant.

⁷⁶ 1852-3 (991), *Returns showing the number of paupers who have become chargeable on any parishes and Unions in England and Wales under the operation of the Poor Removal Act 1846*.

⁷⁷ *Carlisle Patriot*, 10 April 1852.

It was this sense of bewilderment about how to manage the Irish paupers, which was taken up by the editor of the *Carlisle Patriot* who reported on their removal from the Poplar Union in London:

After being passed under an order of removal to Cork in Ireland, a woman and three children were sent back to England by the mayor of Cork and admitted to the workhouse in Poplar. The mayor had sent other paupers back to London after removal and this was a serious charge of the ratepayer to be saddled with the family after the expense of paying about £10 in relieving them.⁷⁸

The editor could be said to have an agenda here in making it clear to the readers that the problem in Carlisle was similar to the problem in the metropolis. This could have given the issue a more serious tone by suggestion that, if the London press had provided space in their newspapers about the plight of paupers being removed to Ireland, then the matter was indeed becoming critical. The Mayor of Cork appeared to see a way to avoid the costs of relieving this woman and her family by his refusal to accept any responsibility for destitute paupers who had returned to Ireland after having previously migrated to England. The woman had not only to cope with the problem of being removed twice with her three children, but also had to endure the sea crossing in both directions in winter. What happened to her in Cork before she was deported for the second time is unknown and did not appear to be the concern of the authorities on either side of the Irish Sea. The editor of the *Cork Examiner* John Francis Maguire, a member of the Select Committee, who fought to overthrow the ‘monstrous laws’ of settlement, focused on the same problem when he exposed the state of the ‘removed poor’ who embarked at Irish quays from English and Scottish ports at the height of the famine:

Long ere her paddles cease to revolve, loving eyes are strained to catch the first glimpse of some dear object...But there is one class to whom no anxious eyes seek out, to whom no ready hand is extended...Their eyes are dull and bleared, their steps faltering, their whole appearance indicative of misery and despair...These are the ‘removed poor’, who have been got rid of by English, Welsh and Scotch parishes.⁷⁹

Maguire went to great pains to demand changes to what he perceived as cruel acts, which allowed authorities to remove Irish and Scots after decades of residence, an issue which this study recounts later in the chapter with respect to the Berwick-upon-Tweed’s removal practice. But the weight of opinion was against any substantial reform and it was not for another seven years that the period of residency required to avoid removal was reduced to three years in 1861.

⁷⁸ *Carlisle Patriot*, 7 January 1854.

⁷⁹ J. F. Maguire, *Removal of Irish Poor from England and Scotland* (London, 1854), pp. 5-6.

It was not only the removal of migrants back to their legal place of settlement in Ireland that raised the ire of the Irish authorities. Any relief that had been provided by the British government for the starving thousands had to be accounted for by repayment on long-term loans. The county of Cork pleaded with the Treasury to extend their debt facility from ten to twenty years on a massive debit of £274,489.⁸⁰ In the same year in Belfast, Dr William McGee, a vocal critic of this British practice of removal gave evidence to a Select Committee. He spelt out the desperate circumstances of these individuals who were ‘abandoned at the seaport nearest to, or most convenient to England or Scotland, without reference to place of birth or the former residence in Ireland’.⁸¹ From wherever they found themselves on the quayside on arrival in Ireland, they then had to find refuge before being forced to make their way to their legal place of settlement, however far that was from the port. Maguire empathised with these mobile paupers en route to uncertain destinations, when he referred to paupers being returned to ports ‘fifty miles, one hundred miles, or more’ from their homes when he asked: how are they to reach that distant place, destitute of means, of energy, perhaps of death?’.⁸² It was the continuity of the authorities’ difficulties in managing these problems that was most significant throughout these reports. Each authority was left to handle their own process problems in the removal of the Irish and Scots paupers who had no entitlement to public support within a system fraught with administrative, legal and practical hurdles that contained this human mobile cargo en route across land and sea.

2 (iv) *The conveyancing process and the removal contractor*

The processing of unsettled paupers, and the degree of success achieved, was a crucial element of the contemporary debate. The law controlling conveyancing of vagrants and paupers to their place of settlement was extremely vague especially about the right of the parish to hand responsibility to a private individual to execute the work. Those ordered to be removed, and being without money, were issued with a ‘pass’ by the magistrate to allow them to walk or be ‘carted’ to a designated port or border town accompanied by the ‘pass master’ or a police constable. At each county boundary, they would be handed over to the constable in that county, a local magistrate would endorse the pass, and they would continue their journey. It was argued that a constable, as an upholder of the law, was a legitimate agent for this purpose but other profit seeking individuals on the lookout for a steady income were quick to see the opportunity

⁸⁰ *Carlisle Journal*, 30 Mar 1849.

⁸¹ 1854 (396), *Select Committee on Poor Removal*, p.201.

⁸² J. F. Maguire, *Removal of the Irish*, p.5.

of an income when the removal of the ‘unsettled’ was written into the bill. Such agents were referred to as ‘vagrant contractors’, ‘carriers’ or ‘pass-masters’.⁸³ As early as 1790, opinion was highly charged on the means of conveying those ordered to be removed: -

passes were being granted generally and indiscriminately to all persons whatever; and that many persons, even voluntarily, apply for them; and that the punishment is seldom inflicted as ordered by the 17th Geo. II Vagrant Act by which means many persons, who are not objects of the vagrancy laws are conveyed to distant parts of the United Kingdom at public expense.⁸⁴

This use of the law as a subsidised travel system has been explored by T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharp, who sensed a degree of cooperation, even collusion, between the authorities and the vagrant.⁸⁵ They also noted that illness and disability were both reasons for begging and acceptable excuses, often evoking the sympathy of the public, and might even have been encouraged by parishes. But it was often sickness or misfortune that drove the vagrants into the arms of the law where they were routinely passed as vagrants before they became a liability. This was a very convenient approach to the problem for the authorities if they were to avoid the costs of the payment of relief. ‘To be passed’ was a process that faced anyone who was ordered to be sent back to their place of settlement. Neither the 1822 nor the 1824 Acts abolished the passing system nor did they include provision for conveying vagrants to their settlements, this was retained in the 1819 act by grouping the Irish and Scots in the same category as vagrants. There was such ambiguity in this legislation that justices felt free to accept or reject previous laws as they thought fit.⁸⁶ Some argued that magistrates used this ambiguity as a means of administering the law with a degree of wisdom and humanity which John Christian tried to do.⁸⁷ But it could also be argued that this was an abuse of the law in much the same way as those who abused the law by forged documents to obtain free passage on their journey.⁸⁸ Forced removal by magistrates when relief was claimed, and voluntary removal by the magistrates when ‘passed for removal’, enabled migrants to claim the fare home from the Union and it was this interpretation of the nature of the system that was questionable. Did it represent the free will of the migrant or was it ‘forced encouragement’? The editor of the *Cork Examiner*, J. F. Maguire

⁸³ Audrey Eccles, *The eighteenth-century vagrancy contractor* (Surrey, 2012), p.52.

⁸⁴ *Proclamation Society* (1790), pp.1-2, in A. Eccles, *The eighteenth-century vagrancy contractor*, p.72.

⁸⁵ T. Hitchcock, P. King and P. Sharp (eds.), *Chronicling poverty: the voices and strategies of the English poor, 1640-1840* (London, 1997), p.73.

⁸⁶ Audrey Eccles, *The eighteenth-century vagrancy contractor*, p.22.

⁸⁷ Witness the approach of the magistrate John Christian referred to in fn. 43, p.47.

⁸⁸ Audrey Eccles, *The eighteenth-century vagrancy contractor*, p.65.

and member of the Select Committee, had something to say on this topic and repeatedly asked witnesses to explain the nature of the system:

Maguire ‘...voluntary removals do not always represent free will upon the part of the persons removed?’

Walker ‘... Not altogether...there are large numbers of parties who know perfectly well that if they do not go willingly they will be made to go’.⁸⁹

Evidently this was a facility vulnerable to abuse simply because the pass was free when claimants may have had sufficient funds to pay. Without the means to pay a pass was issued as a licence to convey the pauper or vagrant to their place of settlement, including on board a vessel to Ireland. The 1821 Vagrancy Report recorded witnesses who testified that vagrants ‘gave false accounts of their settlements or used forged papers in order to obtain a passage.’⁹⁰ Once on board no one cared much what happened to them and if weather conditions prevented sailing, the union district common fund of the port bore the costs of relief whilst they waited. Indeed, in the introduction to the Committee on Vagrancy Law report, the chairman emphasised the nature of the current legislation and said ‘the country is plundered, the law is violated and its object unattained in a majority of cases...the vagrant seldom reaches the parish to which he or she *really* belongs and rarely detained by parish officers if he does’.⁹¹ A witness to the committee took the opportunity to outline the problems of conveying paupers from the far south of the country to the far north, a long and difficult journey to be endured in an open cart:

A woman had been brought by a vagrant pass from Plymouth and in her examination, had sworn that she had a settlement at Maryport...when she arrived there they examined her themselves, she then admitted that she had no settlement at all, but she claimed a settlement in the right of her husband. They totally disbelieved it. I told them I could give them no advice it having been done by the order of the sessions.⁹²

According to the law there was nothing the authorities in Maryport could do but give her ‘a guinea or two’ and send her on her way. Much to their dismay this had been the fourth case of a similar nature they had had to deal with.

By the time of the new Vagrancy Act (5 George IV c.83) in 1824, disillusion had set in regarding the contractors’ role and the suspicion of fraud.⁹³ There was no mention in this legislation of passing vagrants, but the passing of Irish and Scots poor was left in place and those unions with numbers of Irish or Scots migrants retained the contractors to manage them,

⁸⁹J. F. Maguire, *Removal of Irish Poor from England and Scotland*. pp. 5-6.

⁹⁰ 1815 (473), *Report from Committee on the State of Mendicity in the Metropolis*, p.60.

⁹¹ 1821 (543), *Report of the Select Committee on the Existing Laws Relating to Vagrants*.

⁹² 1821 (543), *Report of the Select Committee*, pp. 55-57.

⁹³ 1824 (332), *Vagrancy Act (5 Geo. IV, c.83)*.

especially in coastal towns like Whitehaven and Maryport.⁹⁴ The need to deal with vagrants in particular was also evident in the Brampton Union, ten miles east of Carlisle where tenders were advertised for ‘the conveying and passing of all Irish vagrants and paupers removed under legal passes’.⁹⁵ It was this demand for the conveyance of those without settlement that continued to preoccupy the attention of the authorities, rather than the needs of the poor.

2 (v) *Managing the fraudsters*

If there was any indication of scandal, fraud or potential pecuniary penalties for the ratepayer, the press was quick to respond. One Carlisle newspaper provided a blow by blow account of the removal of Scotch paupers to Carlisle prior to their transport to the border of Scotland. This lengthy article rang alarm bells for the editor who regarded the costs of ‘passing’ these individuals as suspicious:

...here is a bundle of persons, all purporting to have been travelling at once; if they had ever passed through Carlisle, they would have attracted as much attention as a regiment of soldiers, yet no one even saw them...If these vagrants were Irish I should expect the expense to be great. But they are Scotch. The charge for Irish is small in comparison. There must have been some manufacture of passes.⁹⁶

After a lengthy interrogation of this ‘vagrant contractor’ the Clerk of the Peace turned his attention to the Scots who were costing more than expected and had raised suspicions that the number being provided for was incorrect. Generally, the opposite had been the case. The Irish were usually more expensive, being more numerous, and usually subject to more suspicion than the Scots. The report continued:

The Clerk of the Peace is anxious to determine why there has been, ‘a vast increase of expenses in passing Scotch paupers through the County to Scotland’. He is, ‘astonished to find the duplicates so far to exceed anything I could have imagined’. It is clear that there is some impersonation of Scotsmen by Irishmen according to the Clerk’s witness, a Scotsman from Glasgow sent out of Bristol together with twenty others who says he is sure that, ‘there is not a Scotsman among them but himself’.⁹⁷

The situation seems to have become so serious that a report was ordered to be prepared by the Clerk of the Peace who described the state of affairs at the Quarter Sessions as ‘an atrocious system of dishonest practice long carried on in the removal of paupers from the western parts of England’.⁹⁸ The authorities proclaimed their solidarity with the report, which was published in

⁹⁴ Audrey Eccles, *The eighteenth-century vagrancy contractor* (2006), p.22.

⁹⁵ *Carlisle Patriot*, 16 May 1832.

⁹⁶ *Carlisle Patriot*, 24 October 1829.

⁹⁷ *Carlisle Patriot*, 24 October 1829.

⁹⁸ *Cumberland Pacquet and Wares Whitehaven Advertiser*, 24 Oct 1829, p.2.

the local newspapers and widely reported in the rest of the country. In Manchester and Bristol, the cry went out for a crackdown on the fraudsters who repeatedly recharged the authorities for conveying vagrants from county to county. This article was a remarkable account of individuals being repeatedly ‘passed’:

...the Inspector or pass-master at Bristol, said of a group, ‘*They are all Irish, but take them away*’...to such an extent was the system carried, that within the last twelve months, there have been passed 78 persons and families that have been removed from Bristol, Gloucester and Surrey twice; 38 that have been passed three times; six who have been passed four times; seven who have been passed five times; two, six times, one nine times, one ten times; and one thirteen times.⁹⁹

If this was indeed the case, then fraud on this scale was worth a second look and E. P. Thompson certainly thought so in his study of the Irish community when he wrote ‘They turned the obsolete settlement laws to their advantage, joy-riding up and down the country at parochial expense...slipping out of the overseer’s cart when the stopping place seemed congenial’.¹⁰⁰ A cart ride up and down the country at the beginning of November could hardly have been a ‘joy-ride’ whatever the weather, but the abuse of travelling allowances to those who were being removed was signally important. The editor of *The Times* refers to ‘the great complaint however in Cumberland and Westmorland is against paupers travelling with passes, which has led to great abuses, and been a heavy tax on the county rates’.¹⁰¹ For *The Times* to take sides with the Cumberland ‘complaint’ must have given the issue a degree of emphasis and possibly added to the sense of anxiety in the region. Perhaps there was an element of exaggeration here which fuelled fears for the authorities, but their responsibility under the law was to ensure that those removed actually arrived at their appointed destination. Captain J. W. Pringle’s report to the Poor Law Commissioners on Cumberland and Westmorland tells this extraordinary story of a pregnant Scots woman intent on giving birth on the English side of the border in order to seek settlement for the child in the parish where it was born:

Arthuret is one of the border parishes, and women are frequently brought into them from Scotland, immediately before their delivery, for the sake of giving the child a settlement, and obtaining the allowance for it. The parish officers are of course on watch for such occurrences, by immediately removing the woman. A woman, after being carted across the border four times, was delivered on a small island in the river [*Esk*] dividing the two countries, which may belong to either, and therefore lead to a law suit’.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 31 October 1929, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, 1963), p.478.

¹⁰¹ 1834 (44), *Report from His Majesty’s commissioners for enquiring into the administration and practical operation of the poor laws*, p.312A.

¹⁰² 1834 (44), *Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners*, p.311.

For this woman to be ‘carted’ four times speaks of the tragic, almost farcical dilemma she faced in her efforts to obtain financial support by giving birth on an island in the middle of the River Esk. Pringle goes on to say ‘In another case ...a woman had been brought across the border in a cart, the surgeon attended her, and she was delivered under a hedge’.¹⁰³

This was the backdrop which prioritised the recruitment of independent agents as the preferred option for dealing with removals. Police constables were the logical choice for the job but the office was unpopular because of all the travelling they had to do in all weathers. Costs were related to expenses rather than a fee and this allowance enabled individuals interested in the work to view it as a viable proposition.¹⁰⁴ The Poor Law Commission’s concern, as the governing body, was to ensure that the local authorities managed the process with some degree of success, but this was not always the case:

...we are of the opinion that the arrangements at present made for these paupers are exceedingly defective. The place in which the Irish are landed does not seem in any way to depend on their place of birth, or on the neighbourhood to which they are desirous of returning. Paupers belonging to Cork are landed at Dublin, and the paupers belonging to Dublin are landed at Cork, apparently as best suits the vagrancy contractor.¹⁰⁵

These arrangements, referred to earlier in this chapter, had the potential ingredients of a political scandal. The lack of control of a process, in what appeared to be an indifferent approach by ships’ masters who transported the deportees to Ireland, could have led to dire consequences for the pauper and for the authorities, if their financial affairs were exposed.

The Assistant Secretary to the Poor Law Commission, responsible for drafting the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838, claimed that the law of settlement had ‘always operated adversely to that of the general population and impeded the labourer, encumbered agriculture, enforced idleness and encouraged the pauperism it created and made stagnant’.¹⁰⁶ His report in 1851 on the law of settlement and removal is interwoven with terms which, on the one hand excused the English for the lack of enterprise and mobility, and on the other hand praised the Irish for their application of labour. He also condemned the system for allowing them to exploit the loopholes within it and at the same time provided the scope for the sort of fraudulent practice described above. He gets off to good start by expressing in a short sentence his opinion of the pauper, ‘the pauper is ignorant, confused in his intelligence, and interested in deceiving’. This provided an

¹⁰³ 1834 (44), *Report from His Majesty’s commissioners*, p.311.

¹⁰⁴ Audrey Eccles, *Vagrancy in Law and Practice under the Old Poor law* (Farnham, 2010), p.28.

¹⁰⁵ 1841 (327), *Seventh Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p.34.

¹⁰⁶ 1851 (675), *Report of George Goode Esq. to the Poor Law Board on the law of settlement and removal of the poor being a further report in addition to those printed in 1850*, p.166.

inappropriate definition of a vulnerable candidate who was liable to be exploited by the conveyancing contractor, if he was inclined to do so. By collectivising the noun ‘pauper’ in this way it became his reference point for future judgements and accented the lack of tolerance expressed on the same topic by Henry V’s law makers more than four centuries earlier who said:

For the quietness and peace within the realm of England, and for the increase and enstoring of the land of Ireland, it is ordained and stablished, that all Irishmen and Irish clerks, beggars called chamberdeacons, to be voided out of the realm.¹⁰⁷

For these individuals to be ‘voided out of the realm’ would no doubt have suited the parish ratepayers in the far north and elsewhere in the mid-nineteenth century, many of whom were business people or farmers and strongly in favour of cutting costs. Longtown and East Ward Unions in Cumberland made their position very clear on this issue:

The great majority of the Irish in the parish were contributing to the manufacturing prosperity in the town and the Board of Guardians were reluctant to remove except at times of severe distress, nevertheless in 1843 they resolved no longer to relieve the poor belonging to other Unions.¹⁰⁸

Clearly the poor law guardians viewed the Irish as a usable but dispensable asset and thus different from the settled paupers. This spoke firmly of the economy of the town as strong and prosperous with a willingness to remove the poor when the business community were squeezed by recession. But it also indicated a degree of xenophobia by allowing the ‘incomers’ to make their contribution when it suited them and refusing them relief when it did not, perhaps in the belief that they were looking for a ‘free ticket’ home. Goode claimed that the Irish in particular managed to get this ‘free ticket’ home to Ireland whenever they applied for relief by passing from one county to the next until they arrived at one of the designated ports of embarkation. This, he opines ‘was equivalent to a public undertaking to provide for the Irish reaper more than half of his travelling expenses’, more than half because the return journey to Ireland cost more than it did to come to England. As if to underpin the absolute necessity for Irish labour he went on to cite the evidence in the Commissioners Enquiry into the Poor laws in 1834, which pointed to the advantages of employing Irish labour when the English labour is ‘locked’ in his own parish for fear of losing it and because ‘English men cannot be got to do the same work for the same wages’.¹⁰⁹ So the authorities find themselves between a rock and a hard place on this issue,

¹⁰⁷ 1413, *Act of 1 Hen. V, c.8*, 1851 (675), p. 169.

¹⁰⁸ CRO, PUB/2/5, *West Ward Guardians’ Minute Book*, 15 Aug 1841 & 17 May 1841, in R. N. Thompson, unpublished PhD Thesis, ‘The new poor law in Cumberland and Westmorland: 1834-1871 (Newcastle University, 1976), p.244.

¹⁰⁹ 1851 (675), *Report to the Poor Law Board on the law of settlement and removal*, p.177.

risk the fraudulent claims for removal and conveyance back to Ireland, or lose a valuable element of the labouring class when trade recovered and they were needed most.

There was no lack of effort, albeit with limited success, to establish the control required in this process and routes were set out in detail for removal of persons from each parish. The *Removal of Scotch and Irish Paupers Regulations 1846* sets out in detail how the Irish and Scots paupers were to be conveyed across the counties of the far north to their place of settlement:

Natives of Scotland to be removed to Gretna by public conveyance or by sea from Port of Whitehaven to a port named in schedule or port of Annan; Natives of Ireland or Isle of Man to be conveyed to Port of Whitehaven by railway or other public conveyance and by sea to one of the ports on the schedule. Ports of destination in Ireland to be nearest port to that where person was born or resided.¹¹⁰

These rules were a clear and determined effort to deal with the issue as efficiently as possible through the Warrant procedure, but the ‘waiting time’ in ports such as Whitehaven as referred to above was not addressed. A Carlisle newspaper took up the argument:

It is the portion of expense that the seaports have to bear where Irish and Scotch paupers are sent and thus become chargeable to that parish which is causing alarm. The accompaniment of these to Ireland takes two, often three days, during which the paid officers’ work is neglected.¹¹¹

This type of reporting was based on estimated costs and some inconvenience, which no doubt had some justification. Costs were affirmed as ‘one penny a mile for the conveyance and a sum not exceeding sixpence a day for the maintenance of each person so conveyed’, plus the contractor’s supervisory charge of around one shilling per day.¹¹² Perhaps some inconvenience money was also paid to the officers, but hardly costs that would have had any great impact, certainly not on the scale of the costs incurred by the Liverpool vestry. It was there that every penny was counted when thousands were being removed in one month, and computed meticulously as: warrant - 2s 6d, plus 1s for duplicate warrant, plus 1s for copy of examination; allowances for ‘time and trouble’ - 3s 0d, plus travelling expenses at 6d per mile; maintenance and lodging for each person – 2s 6d per day, plus 3d per mile travelling costs; passage to Ireland - 4s 2d per journey to Cork and 10s to Dublin.¹¹³ It was necessary for the Justices of the Peace in each county to adopt the recommended reimbursement levels for such expenses, and Cumberland was quick off the mark at the Carlisle Quarter Sessions on 12 January 1846 in

¹¹⁰ CRO, D/HOD/11/118, *Regulations for administering removal orders, ports of embarkation and conveyancing allowances* [Figure 2.2, Appendix].

¹¹¹ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 13 July 1848.

¹¹² 1861(179), *A Bill to amend the Law relating to the Removal of Poor Persons to Scotland and Ireland*, p.3.

¹¹³ CRO, D/HOD/11/118 [Figure 2.2, Appendix].

itemising the above costs, at a slightly higher level than the committee recommended.¹¹⁴ Faced with potential accumulation of costs like these, the unions affected were bound to be nervous not only about numbers of migrants who landed on the quay side, but also their re-embarkation soon after they arrived as removed aliens. The irony of this situation was in the return of passengers to the west coast ports from where they had been removed earlier, who now ran the risk of being removed for a second or third time. This perennial complaint about ‘free passage for the pauper to his home to visit his friends in the interior of Ireland at the expense of the parish is reiterated yet again by the writer in the same newspaper when he commented:

...an Irish pauper became chargeable in Whitehaven and the Poor Law Commissioner wrote to them to advise them to send the woman to Ireland. They did so at an expense of £5. In these instances, we have taken it upon ourselves to give away public money, but when we are met with eight or ten at once, knowing that there are more Irish paupers to follow, we are really at a loss how to act. Lancaster and Cumberland are the two counties most subject to inroads of Irish paupers.¹¹⁵

The assertion that the two most affected counties were Lancaster and Cumberland gave the writer some leverage in the argument about the way in which public money was spent in this isolated region and thus succeeded in raising fears of pecuniary costs. In the same newspaper, a magistrate leaped to the defence of the woman:

It certainly would be a great cruelty to turn a woman adrift upon the world with only eight or ten shillings in her pocket. You might turn a lusty, stalwart Irishman out with safety, as he would find the means of supporting himself; but the other case appears to be one in which private charity should slip in.¹¹⁶

This sympathy for the woman indicated a different attitude to the problem that faced the magistrate and manner in which he dealt with the case. Similar difficulties were addressed at the same time by the Clerk to the Board of Guardians of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Union who wrote a letter to the Commissioners in Whitehall urgently seeking advice about the confused state of affairs for their administrative team on the matter of vagrant removal.¹¹⁷ The attempt to recover their expenses was so confused that three alternative sources of payment were possible: the common fund of the union; the county rate of the County of Northumberland; and the fund of the Borough of Berwick-upon-Tweed. Wherever the recovery of costs came from this case

¹¹⁴ CRO, Whitehaven, Folder, T. H. Hodgson, Clerk of the Peace, *Order by the Justices of the Peace, ‘An act to amend the laws relating to the removal of poor persons born in Scotland, Ireland, the Islands of Man, Scilly, Jersey or Guernsey, and chargeable in England’*, 12 January 1846.

¹¹⁵ *Carlisle Patriot*, 6 July 1850.

¹¹⁶ *Carlisle Patriot*, 6 July 1850.

¹¹⁷ TNA, MH12/8981/7, *Vagrant removal: Letter from Clerks to Board of Guardians Berwick-upon-Tweed to Poor Law Board*, 24 Feb 1851.

served to illustrate just how bewildering and time consuming the removal of one Irish vagrant could be. It also demonstrated just how single minded the Board could be in their drive to rid themselves of all possible costs of a long-term commitment to sustaining anyone who could become a liability. But all unions were not necessarily in agreement about who or what were the causes of their problems. In Whitehaven, the idea of using the police to monitor and control the applicants was unacceptable to some:

Most of the applicants...for relief are imposters in some shape or form, so that applying to the police officer for relief bears a close resemblance to entering the lion's den that few of them (and these would have included the most deserving portion) have the courage to apply at all, and generally contrive to make their way out of town as soon as possible.¹¹⁸

Even in 1848 this was acknowledged as a problem for the 'deserving poor' and Frank Neal's work on Irish migrants in Lancashire during the Great Famine has shown that unprecedented numbers came to the county fleeing starvation and the prospect of removal back to such a scene.¹¹⁹

2 (vi) *The human cost of removal*

If the financial burden of removal was relatively low in the far north, how did the human costs compare? Frank Neal made a valuable evaluation of the ordeals of individual tragedies in the north west in his research, which relied on a range of comparators. These included the journeys they made, the long distances they travelled and the conditions which they had to contend with as they passed from place to place. He used a series of examples to illustrate this point, but the recurring theme which he emphasised repeatedly, was the fear of parishes being inundated with claims for relief by the Irish at the expense of the local settled poor. The mantra of the Guardians across the unions was resounding, 'As trustees of the parochial funds they had a moral obligation to their own ratepayers first'.¹²⁰ This prioritising of funds, and the threat of removal as unsettled in the parish, was 'hung up *in terrorem* over the heads of the poor'¹²¹ to provide a shield of financial preclusion. This form of deterrent to apply for relief was acknowledged by both the authorities and the unsettled poor long before the migrant famine influx in the 1840s. The approach to the dilemma this posed for the migrant had been discussed

¹¹⁸ *Whitehaven Herald*, 13 May 1848.

¹¹⁹ Frank Neal, Black 47, pp. 217-222.

¹²⁰ Frank Neal, Black 47, p.103.

¹²¹ E. Head, 'The Law of Settlement', *Edinburgh Review*, 87 (1848), p. 456; 1854, *Report from the Select Committee on Poor removal*, p. 188.

by Commissioners and inspectors in the 1830s when they highlighted the hardship caused to ‘the poor and industrious ‘ person by a law which left them liable to be removed from a place they had lived for many years and to be then sent to a parish where they were not known.¹²² A further report of the Royal Commissioners in 1843 agreed unequivocally that ‘the Irish and non-settled poor knew well that the receipt of relief would be followed by removal and he preferred any extremity to this result’.¹²³ Parochial and government officials were clearly at loggerheads when this issue was under scrutiny.

To provide some perspective on this the following sample of thirty-nine cases from Tynemouth revealed interesting details.¹²⁴ These are summarised for the period April to October 1849 in Table 2.13 [Appendix, p.223]. Four fifths of the removals (31 out of 39) were Irish, the remainder were Scots; the maximum length of residence in England was 33 years, the minimum one month. Of the thirty-nine warrants issued, half were for men and half were for women, either alone or with their children. Some removals were particularly noteworthy: one Irish man’s duration of residence, was 33 years, very similar to the case of the man in Carlisle referred to earlier. This man, was probably at the end of his working life (or even arrived as a child - no date of birth), but at a stage when he required support and, rather than go into the workhouse, may have decided to return home to Ireland. After 33 years his kith and kin would probably be unable to provide him with much help. Two Scots men, resident for 26 and 27 years, were perhaps unable to work due to sickness or unemployment and, after having claimed relief, had to face the consequences of removal accompanied by their wives and children (youngest six years). Another Irish man and his wife had been resident for thirteen years. One Scots woman and two Irish women accompanied by their children (three in each family, the youngest five months) had been resident for between nine and seventeen years. The future for these women would have been bleak, perhaps as widows or abandoned by their husbands, or even waiting for the return of their husbands after a journey in search of employment. Finally, one Irish man accompanied by his four children (4-12 years) without his wife, perhaps widowed or left alone after six years, with four young children to care for, a serious challenge in his search for employment. Conjecture on the circumstances of these lives is endless but the law was clear on matters of women living without husbands after 1845. However long they had lived in the parish, ‘they were not to be removed until one year after their husband’s death’, which provided them with at least a ‘stay of removal’ in which the widow had time to collect her thoughts on

¹²² 1839 (20), *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor law commissioners*, p.55.

¹²³ 1843 (21), *Ninth Annual Report of the Royal Commissioners*, p. 35.

¹²⁴ TWRO, PU/NC/4/7/1, *Warrant of Removal*, 3 April 1849 [Figure 2.1, Appendix].

the limited options available to her. Tynemouth Poor Law Union would have been forced to pay relief to this family for a year and would be anxious to transfer such costs to the wife's parish in Ireland or Scotland as soon as possible. Behind these bare statistics lies the stark reality of the circumstances and the choices that women were faced with as widows and unmarried mothers, a topic which will be explored further in chapter 6.

In reviewing this forced exodus, the Berwick-upon-Tweed Board of Guardians wrote to the House of Commons in 1848 to address what they perceived as a serious problem:

...for even admitting that the reason [*for the Act*] is a humane one when applied to the English widow, it is contended that the circumstances of the great majority of the widows of the Irishmen and Scotchmen are totally different and not such as to entitle them to any such consideration or benevolent line of conduct.¹²⁵

What is abundantly clear from this statement is that there were different criteria applied to Irish and Scots widows to those applied to English widows. Furthermore, considering the number of Irish and Scots recorded as removed for the five-year period between 1838 and 1843, any public fears seem somewhat exaggerated, despite the fact that there were thirty-nine removed in 1849.¹²⁶

In an about turn on the principle of chargeability, a Bill brought before Parliament in February 1854 proposed abolishing removals and making all paupers chargeable to the common union fund but this was defeated and removals continued apace. Across the whole of England 11,113 were removed (Table 2.8) at a cost of £15,595 of which the Irish were 5,291 (48%) and the Scots 324 (3.3%). These numbers would have included a number of Irish families drawn back to their homeland after having fled the threat of starvation in earlier years, or the claims of 'free-ticket' users referred to earlier in this chapter. Numbers in Cumberland and Northumberland when compared to the rest of the country, were quite small: 254 English, 47 Scots and 40 Irish at a cost of £459. But what is equally noteworthy is that there were ten times as many English removed from Northumberland as there were from Cumberland; three times as many Scots and four times as many Irish. The more densely populated urban industrial region of Tyneside would account for the higher numbers when compared to the less densely populated area of west Cumberland and removal costs would inevitably be higher for the Northumberland unions due to the longer conveyancing distances to the west coast port of Whitehaven.

¹²⁵ TNA, MH12/8980/87, 25 July 1848, *Letter from Berwick-upon-Tweed Board of Guardians*.

¹²⁶ TNA, MH12/ 8978/180, 2 June 1844, *Letter from Berwick-upon-Tweed Board of Guardians*.

	Costs incurred	No. of English	No. of Scotch	No. of Irish	Total No. of persons removed
Cumberland	£100	23 (55%)	11 (26%)	8 (19%)	42
Northumberland	£359	231 (77%)	36 (12%)	32 (11%)	299
England	£15,595	5458 (49%)	364 (3.3%)	5,291 (48%)	11,113

Table 2.8: Costs and numbers of English, Irish and Scots, 1854 ¹²⁷

It is clear also, that by 1854 removals of the Irish and Scots from the far north counties were almost the same numerically, though not by cost, and removals of the English were by far the largest proportion of the costs in both counties: 55% in Cumberland and 77% in Northumberland. This finding demonstrates the difference between the far north and the north west of England study in which Donald MacRaild and others suggested that ‘the English and the Scots rarely faced being returned to their home parishes’.¹²⁸ In the far north the removal of English constituted the vast majority.

Inevitably the Irish pauper commanded some attention in the range of questions addressed to witnesses to a Committee on Poor Removal in 1854, even if they did not appear in person to answer them. It is important to remember here that the far north counties had to manage a much larger number of removals in their border-towns of Berwick-upon-Tweed, Port Carlisle, Gretna and Whitehaven, which acted as the receiving towns for removal of migrants from elsewhere in the country. This report provides a rich source from which to make a serious assessment of the attitudes of the committee and their approach to dealing with this problem. The testimonies, which concerned the towns of Berwick-upon-Tweed in the east of the region and Whitehaven in the west, are particularly interesting. These provided further evidence of the difficulties the authorities had in their attempts to deal with the interpretation and implementation of the law. The Scottish poor did not raise the same concerns for English administrators, as they tended to believe that the Scots were much more provident and thrifty than the Irish – ‘to the honour of the people of Scotland’.¹²⁹ This view took no account of the fact that the number of Scots removals was very similar to the number of Irish. Keith Snell’s research extracted figures from this report and compared access to out-door relief by each of the

¹²⁷ 1854 (489), *Return showing the number of orders of removals from parishes*.

¹²⁸ Lewis Darwen, D. M. MacRaild, Liam Kennedy and Brian Gurrin, ‘Unhappy and wretched creatures’: Charity, poor relief and pauper removal in Britain and Ireland during the Great Famine, p.2.

¹²⁹ 1854 (396), *Select Committee on Poor Removals*.

nationalities who had irremovable status (proven permanent residence of five years or more) and drew several conclusions (Table 2.9). In summary, only around fifty per cent of the Irish were given outdoor relief in comparison to nearly eighty per cent for the Scots and ninety per cent for the English.

	In-door	Out-door	% out-door
Irish	68	71	51.1
Scottish	53	191	78.3
English	110	954	89.7
Total	231	1,216	84.0

Table 2.9: Numbers and percentages of irremovable Irish, Scots and English paupers in Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1850, 1854 and 1855 (combined)¹³⁰

	In-door relief per capita (£)	Out-door relief per capita (£)
Irish	1.67	1.24
Scots	1.61	1.86
English	1.81	2.64

Table 2.10: Indoor and out-door relief paid to paupers in Berwick-upon-Tweed during 1850, 1853, 1854 (combined). [Total number of paupers on relief (Jan 1853), in-door: 96,968; out-door: 671,548].¹³¹

Furthermore, Table 2.10 shows per capita spending on out-door relief, as an alternative to the workhouse in-door relief, which indicated clear differentials between the different groups. As Snell pointed out, for the northern unions ‘Irish immigration was a rancorous issue where anti-Irish feeling developed most strongly’,¹³² a possible explanation for the bias towards spending on English paupers. Similar sets of figures for unions in the south, in so far as they were tabulated in the report, show no such anti-Irish bias for those given out-relief.¹³³ Here then is a strong case for suggesting that the attitudes of the Guardians in the northern unions were quite different to the unions in and around the London area. E. Willoby, Clerk of the Berwick Board of Guardians, responses to the Select Committee questions in 1855 were quite different:

¹³⁰ Snell, *Parish and Belonging* (2006), p.324.

¹³¹ Snell, *Parish and Belonging* (2006), p.106.

¹³² Snell, *Parish and Belonging* (2006), p.325.

¹³³ Snell, *Parish and Belonging* (2006), p.335.

the number of removals I have sent herewith [have] no criterion at all of the number of Irish who might have been removed, as the parish authorities do not apply for removal orders when relief is merely casual, and cases of that kind are very numerous.¹³⁴

His returns for the years 1850, 1854 and 1855 (1851-53 had not survived) set out the detail of out-door and in-door costs attributed to English, Scotch and Irish paupers (Table 2.11).

	Year end 25 Mar 1850			Year end 25 Mar 1854			Year end 25 Mar 1855		
	English	Scotch	Irish	English	Scotch	Irish	English	Scotch	Irish
In-door	2.78	1.52	0.79	2.53	1.68	0.94	2.65	2.17	1.68
Out-door	1.17	1.12	1.12	1.57	1.57	1.57	2.43	2.43	2.43

Table 2.11: Cost per capita (£) of in-door and out-door paupers 1850, 1854, 1855 in Berwick-upon-Tweed.¹³⁵

In the cost analysis of Willoby's returns, the Scots were equally as poor as the Irish but they were not equally in receipt of relief. For all three years the English were undoubtedly allowed more spending on their up-keep in the workhouse (in-door) than the Scots and the Irish. The Scots did better than the Irish, but not as well as the English. This demonstrates a clear hierarchy of spending per group. However, even more significantly, out-door expenditure on the three groups strikes a strangely similar treatment in each of the years considered. The figures displayed exact parity across the nationalities, which suggested that the total amount spent was divided equally between the total number of paupers and then allocated pro rata by whoever produced the table in the report. This renders any comparisons of spending per capita on the different nationality groups suspect and therefore of little value for this research. It was very probable that the figures for the three individual groups were not collated separately for out-door paupers, which represented around 84% of the total numbers in receipt of relief at the time. This figure ties in neatly with the national average figure for paupers relieved out-door at 83%.¹³⁶ The prime purpose of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act had been to make the workhouse the default option for relief, rather than the provision of out-door relief, a goal that had evidently not been achieved

¹³⁴ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor removal*, Appendix 2, p. 309. [The background of contemporary literature includes: Thomas de Grey, *Law of Settlement and Rating, and the Relief of the Poor* (London, 1851); Richard Asheton Cross, *The Acts Relating to the Settlement and Removal of the Poor* (London, 1853); J. F. Maguire, *Removal of Irish Poor from England and Scotland* (London, 1854); John Trevor, *The Poor Removal Law, an Aliens Act against the Irish* (London, 1855)].

¹³⁵ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee Report on Poor Removal*.

¹³⁶ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor Removal*.

As a Member of Parliament and past chairman of the Committee of Inquiry into the English Poor Law in 1838, George Poulett Scrope was a key witness who brought experience and charisma to the same meeting. Bearing in mind Willoby's figures for in-door and out-door pauper spending, this was what Scrope said:

I cannot believe for a moment that public opinion, either in England or in Ireland, would countenance any distinction being made in the amount of the relief, or in the nature of the relief afforded to Irish paupers as compared with English.¹³⁷

Whether or not 'public opinion would countenance any distinction', there was proof in the figures provided in Tables 2.9 and 2.10, that this distinction was indeed taking place in Berwick-upon-Tweed. A little later in his testimony he made his personal opinion clear when he spoke of the difference between the Irish and the English:

My opinion is, that the system of relief in England being, from differences of the poor law in the two countries and from the different habits of the people, and the different character of public opinion...it would be unfair upon the ratepayers of England to allow the poor of Ireland unlimited access to that more liberal relief.

Within minutes of his previous statement he confessed to what he perceived as the difference between the nationality and identity of the Irish and concluded that they should be excluded from similar treatment to the English when applying for relief. Scrope's argument to support this difference relied, in its most simplistic terms, on pointing to the worst position that the Irish could be in if they were in their own country, compared to the more favourable liberal way in England. If they did not like what was on offer here then 'you must go back to Ireland and accept the relief that is offered there to a native born Irish and not burden the English ratepayers'.¹³⁸ He went on:

...to allow the Irish poor relief in England would scarce be considered safe to English property, given that the Irish were so peculiarly attached to out-door relief. Even the English workhouses were considered by some to be a magnet for the Irish poor, given their great superiority...in the character and amount of relief over Irish workhouses.¹³⁹

Under the pressure of the Committee's questioning Scrope revealed his indifference to the plight of the Irish migrants when he made known his approach to the hardship endured by those removed and transported by sea in the winter:

...free emigrants who come from Ireland to England are exposed to a great deal of suffering in the winter season...and a pauper can hardly expect any greater amount of accommodation than he would obtain as a free man from his own resources.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor removal*, p.90.

¹³⁸ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor removal*, p.99.

¹³⁹ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor removal*, pp. xiii, 32-3.

¹⁴⁰ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor removal*, p.113.

There is a blindness here, perhaps one could go so far as to say ‘wilful blindness’, to the conditions faced by the deck passengers on the sea crossing from Ireland, as referred to earlier. Many were escaping dire circumstances at the price of a three pence ticket for a three to five-day journey on deck in winter, which amounted to the minimum cost for the maximum exposure. Scrope’s view was grounded in the principle that, if they could endure the crossing to England then they were quite capable of enduring the same on their return.

In the west of the region, even in the peak years of the Irish famine, removals from the Whitehaven union were very small in number. William Wilson, Guardian on the Whitehaven Board of Guardians for thirteen years, provided his detailed evidence to the same committee in 1855 to demonstrate this (Table: 2.12) and contended that only twenty removals were made in the six years between 1847 and 1853.¹⁴¹ This remarkably low number suggested that: high levels of employment; kin support in the towns; and irremovable status for many Irish who had been living there for five years or more; had kept these numbers at such a low level. They did not of course include the removal of Irish paupers not resident in the Whitehaven Union district conveyed to the port from elsewhere in the country. This report, with its wide range of witness statements, had serious ramifications for the future of poor law.

	Irish removals	Vagrants relieved		
		Irish	Scotch	English
1847	7	404	111	127
1850	0	-	-	-
1851	1	-	-	-
1852	4	65	19	56
1853	8	39	9	46
Total	20	684	140	94

Table 2.12: Numbers of Irish removals and vagrants relieved in Whitehaven Poor Law Union, 1847-1853.¹⁴²

Later acts built in several of its recommendations including the attention to removals in winter weather; the length of residence required to qualify for irremovability; and perhaps most

¹⁴¹ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor removal*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁴² 1855 (374), *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Removals together with the proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index*, pp.49-50.

importantly the more general awareness of the injustice attached to removal of the Irish and Scots after having lived and worked in towns for many years and forced to apply for relief. Inevitably, those called to provide witness statements to the Committee were exclusively members of the professional classes, many of them employed in the relief of paupers. These witnesses were confident in their assertions that, 'Irish and Scots paupers' statements, with regard to residence, were equally unreliable'.¹⁴³ This was an interesting conclusion considering the number of paupers who attended committee meetings was nil, and somehow warranted a heading in one section of the report - '*Statement of Paupers*'. For historians, anticipating the voice of the labouring class under this banner, there is disappointment. Any statements concerning the lives of English and migrant paupers were all provided by professionals speaking of their experience and contact with paupers, rather than personal statements from the paupers themselves.¹⁴⁴

2 (vii) *Conclusion*

There is no doubt whatever that many of the poor Irish and Scots migrants suffered hardship because of the English settlement law. The lack of coherent and consistent interpretation of the law led to a variety of outcomes for the poor and a range of problems for the authorities. The complexity of the historiography on the topic is well known but Snell provided some useful insights on the crucial concept of 'belonging', concept which underpinned settlement law. The view that settlement primarily 'monitored' and 'regulated' mobility appears to have been no deterrent to the Irish and Scots who made their way to the west Cumberland ports of Whitehaven and Carlisle either alone or with their families looking for work. Where the authorities failed was in their inability to understand their urgent need for work and with it the means of survival. What they saw were individuals who threatened their budgets with overspend and contaminated the environment that they considered suitable for *their* poor, not the poor of 'others'.

Irish charities in Belfast were indignant at the treatment of their citizens who lived in Carlisle, which drew a defensive reaction from the authorities in Whitehall who possibly smelt the potential of a public outcry. Attempts to recover costs were not straight forward, particularly when the individuals removed found themselves conveyed to the most convenient port, rather than the designated port on the '*Order for Removal*'. The forced removal of Irish

¹⁴³ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor removal*, Question numbers: 4194-4213, 4300, p. 773.

¹⁴⁴ 1854-5 (396), *Select Committee on Poor removal*, p.773.

migrants to unfamiliar ports with little to support themselves was ill-considered and inhumane and used as a means to remove the illegally settled poor from parishes where the authorities believed Irish-born disease to be endemic to the Irish. This ‘dumping’ of families to fend for themselves after removal to Ireland was seen to be cruel by some, whilst the removal of Scots was not as susceptible to malpractice or error.

Magistrates complicated the process of issuing warrants by adding their own interpretation of the law to achieve, in some cases, a more informed and tolerant outcome. In such cases the letter of the law was converted into a form of local legalism, which led to some misunderstandings. The Northumberland magistrate Ralph Carr made clear the contradictions he upheld, either by intention or error when he condemned the practice of the removal of English labourers but condoned and reserved the right to apply unnecessary power of removal of the Irish. Parallel to his approach press reports, during the famine crisis years, gave way to the human dimension of the catastrophe with their sympathy for the plight of the families affected, but also provided a plethora of articles based on the fear and loathing of the migrant population. This fear was a key ingredient in the authorities’ pursuit of change, but tempered by the uncertainty of constraints that bound them in the laws of settlement and removal. It was a catalyst in the equation in which the different parties participated, but impossible to measure.

Snell’s analysis of the fear of chargeability highlighted the concerns that the Guardians had of the long-term costs of failure to remove migrant paupers, a process which was often impractical and inefficient. There was also the constant fear of scandal and public condemnation if inappropriate decisions were made. It was perhaps the migrant paupers themselves who had the greatest fear, expressed in the form of acute insecurity as a ‘stranger’ in a foreign environment far from their homeland.

Removal of individuals and families who had lived in Britain for many years was not uncommon, as the number of warrants issued by magistrates in Tynemouth testified. Moreover, Maguire’s and others attempts to change the law met with little success when faced with the deeply grounded opposition ranged against them and women suffered disproportionately to men, particularly when the law invoked the ‘suspension of their identity’ if they married. The famine added quite clearly to the intensity of feeling and opposition to the acceptance of the Irish on the same terms as the Scots and Whitehaven and Carlisle, watched from the sidelines as the ‘removed’ made their way to these crossing points to await their ultimate removal over the border. The guardians in the far north had no reason to fear the numbers that overwhelmed towns like Liverpool and Manchester, but nevertheless the press played on the uncertainty of

future spiraling costs and fraudulent practices in the conveyancing process. To what extent this affected the decisions of the guardians or the attitudes of the public was difficult to measure, but ratepayers would probably have taken note of reference to the numbers coming into and leaving the crossing points and any costs, albeit relatively small, would ultimately have been laid at their door. More salient perhaps, would have been the news from further south of the dilemma that the Lancashire towns had to deal with and the potential for increasing pressure on the ratepayer's purse in the far north.

The demands incurred by the authorities on the poor rate were undoubtedly small and, with the short-term support of private charities, they coped with the various crises by a pragmatic, efficient approach to migrant pauper removal in their need to balance their budgets. No evidence to support any substantial additional costs was found. However hard the authorities worked at increasing the efficiency of the conveyancing process, the press was prompt to undermine their efforts by the use of exaggerated and dramatic language to capture their readers' attention. The allusion to Irish criminality, emphasised by the use of the police in the removal process, further emphasised the branding of Irish paupers as criminals and the propensity to their removal as liabilities on the unions' purse. Swift drew the same conclusions in his studies of the Irish in Britain when he said, 'the poor Irish, who were the only visible Irish, became convenient scapegoats, for environmental deterioration...making a much smaller demand on public and private charity than their poverty and English prejudice might lead one to suppose'.¹⁴⁵ The unanswerable question remains however: how did the Irish and Scots migrants accommodate the continuous underlying condition of insecurity? For some, removal would have been the ultimate humiliation, for others a free ticket home. The next chapter will take a closer look at that ubiquitous problem for the poor law unions touched on earlier – Irish and Scots vagrancy and the quest to define, manage, and reconcile their place in society.

¹⁴⁵ Roger Swift, 'The Historiography of the Irish in Britain in the nineteenth-century' in Patrick O'Sullivan, *The Irish in the new communities* (London, 1992), p.64.

Chapter 3

The growing threat of vagrancy

3 (i) *Themes and perspectives*

The common perception in the historiography of the region is that vagrants were met by the authorities and the public with prejudice, fear and hostility. Negative assumptions regarding the character and motivation of vagrants led to labels such as ‘dirty, violent, ungrateful, filthy, profligate, idle and immoral’ being used to describe them.¹ This could be particularly true of the Irish but can this be wholly justified?

Three fundamental themes can be highlighted within this background of contemporary historiography which will seek to establish the veracity of these claims. First, the fear of vagrants and their apparent lawlessness. Vagrants, especially Irish vagrants, were perceived as a threat to the norms of decency embodied in the morality of the mid-nineteenth century, as criminals preying on society, particularly women. Secondly, the reliance of vagrants on the Poor Law and their potential to drain local resources by claiming casual relief at the workhouse. Thirdly, the difficulty of dealing with a seemingly intractable problem which had defied lawmakers and enforcers alike under the old and the new poor law. Anyone: prostitute, rough sleepers, ex-soldiers and their wives or job-seeking tramps, could find themselves labelled as a vagrant. For women, there were a range of difficulties that had to be dealt with by a male dominated management structure and the full force of their claims to the morality generated by society during the nineteenth century. On their journeys within the region, in their search for work and better life chances, migrants made use of workhouses and common lodging house facilities, all of which brought them into direct contact with the authorities and the differential treatment they were awarded. This chapter seeks to understand these different perceptions and difficulties that the migrant, whether vagrant or simply on the tramp, experienced in their bid to make a life in the far north.

It is clear that the poor, wherever they found themselves on the poverty spectrum, were managed in a variety of ways whether they were Irish or Scots migrants looking for alternative settlement, or English nationals within their own country. The wandering pauper, and their assumed association with degeneracy and immorality, fell into the category of undeserving poor: those who could work but refused to accept the norms of society and consequently were treated

¹ F. Neal, *Black 47* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.13.

as outcasts by the authorities particularly after the introduction of the New Poor Law. At the root of the system there existed a profound sense of localism, as described in the previous chapter, with practices varying across the counties.²

What the Select Committees and law makers made of these difficulties was frequently reported in the local newspapers. One article in 1811, long before the Great Famine in Ireland, reported the growing concern after a public meeting at the Town Hall in Whitehaven. This was in the shape of a nine-point plan formulated in an effort to take the most determined measures for effectually ‘Clearing the Townships of Whitehaven and Preston Quarter and Neighbourhoods thereof, of all Vagrants, Imposters and Travelling beggars of every description’.³ It served as a manifesto of directives for public presentation and distribution throughout Cumberland and the adjacent counties. Bearing in mind that this was four years before the end of the French wars, when the economy was relatively buoyant and the full effect of the demobilisation of soldiers and sailors tramping between towns looking for work had not yet fully materialised, it was a relatively far sighted set of principles upon which to base the future strategy of the relief authorities. Point 2 of the plan is of particular interest in reference to how the character of the vagrant was determined: ‘Every vagrant applying for relief to be examined and an accurate description registered. Such as shall not appear proper Objects, shall be proceeded against under the Vagrants Act’. This ‘appearance’ and judgement by the police and magistrates was critical in providing a facility to separate the deserving from the undeserving, a perennial problem for the authorities. The requirement to check the credentials and records of the common lodging house-keepers under Point 3 of the plan would have been beyond the most zealous proprietors and inspectors, and it is extremely doubtful if any proof could have been found to suggest that the proprietor knowingly harboured such persons. Given the propensity of the poor to share accommodation, whether migrant or not, must have been problematic for the authorities. The absence of any reference to the removal of such ‘objects’ was significant. When vagrants came into a parish they were not strictly persons ‘coming to settle themselves’ or ‘coming to inhabit’⁴ They had never been removable unless they deliberately and voluntarily stayed in any one place.⁵ Six years later the press in Carlisle were still complaining about the liability of the migrant on the host society:

² Audrey Eccles, *Vagrancy in Law and Practice under the Old Poor Law* (Surrey, 2012), pp. 39-47.

³ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 3 November 1811 [see Appendix].

⁴ 1662, Act of Settlement and Removal, 13 and 14 Charles II, c.12.

⁵ *Official Circular*, 41, 30 November 1844, in Sydney and Beatrice Webb, *English Poor Law History, The Last Hundred Years, Vol 1, Part 2* (London, 1929).

Numerous hordes of idle and unsettled...emigrate to this place from Scotland and Ireland with one fixed idea...that we ...are compelled to support them and maintain them...and even when in employment never cease their contriving and attempting under some falsehood or another to elicit money from parish funds.⁶

Faced with hostile comments such as this in their search for work and their expectations of higher earnings and improved living conditions, many found themselves in towns and villages in the far north where life was often worse than that which they had left behind after a long journey in poor health, rough weather and inadequate clothing. In an attempt to characterise the poor in Cumberland William Wordsworth, a Cockermouth resident, demanded from the reader some reflection on the meaning of their humanity:

But deem this man not useless, ---Statesmen! Ye
Who are so restless in your wisdom, ye
Who have a broom still ready in your hands
To rid the world of nuisance;⁷

He could be accused of romanticising the persona of the vagrant, but the first line of the stanza has an element of truth to it and touches the same note as W. H. Davies, the illegitimate son of an Irish itinerant beggar who was well qualified to deliver judgement on the matter, in his reflection on 'men in comfortable circumstances'. If the identity of the vagrant is to be revealed in its most authentic form it is necessary to read his words from the front line of the tramping circuit:

I was born in poverty, raised in sorrow and reared in difficulties, hardships and privations. It is only such as have passed through the various sub-strata of civilised society who can justly appreciate the feelings and sufferings of the thousands who continually live as it were by chance.⁸

The subtle difference between looking like a tramp and looking like a working man was what determined whether one was treated with prejudice or not. Yet maintaining a respectable appearance must have been most difficult for anyone on the road, not least for the Irish famine refugees who had had to undergo the most arduous of journeys prior to their arrival in Britain. Indeed, people genuinely travelling long distances in search of work could easily be mistaken for wanderers. Nineteenth-century vocabulary used to describe and create the character of the poor, was stacked full of derogatory terms for the vagrant poor such as: infested by, over run by, hordes of, and pestilential, in a range of accounts scripted for public consumption. Parliamentary Reports followed this line when they made references to the 'desultory and the

⁶ *Carlisle Journal* 25 January, 1817.

⁷ William Wordsworth, *Poems of Wordsworth* Matthew Arnold (ed.), (London, 1911), p.266.

⁸ W. H. Davies, *Autobiography of a Super Tramp* (London, 1908, repr.1964), p.5.

idle habits' of the migrant pauper on numerous occasions.⁹ This acted as a driver in the development of the tramp/vagrant image of the Irish and Scots seeking employment and settlement in the far north as the surge in the flow of the Irish into Britain preoccupied the authorities. Efforts in 1838 to stem this flow into Britain by introducing a Poor law on the same lines as the English version of 1834 manifestly failed. The Irish continued to come to Britain as both seasonal labourers and permanent settlers, and the appearance of large numbers of homeless Irish vagrants in towns and cities across the country inevitable concerned the authorities and ratepayers.

3 (ii) *Concerns, Options and Priorities*

There were a range of options available to the authorities to maintain control and manage the non-settled Irish and Scots. These included: refusal of relief; prosecution in cases of public begging and the use of warrants for removal to their place of settlement. It was by using the Vagrancy Act to blur the boundaries of the law that enabled the police to arrest those suspected of petty criminal offences.

The Select Committee on vagrants in 1821, chaired by George Chetwynd, focused on the varying types of vagrant and their treatment. Attention centred on the way they were removed and conveyed to their legal settlement; the lodging and harbouring of vagrants; and to the process of apprehending and punishing them.¹⁰ Chetwynd, believed that 'the country was overrun by idle vagrants, who did not wish to work, and who made a subsistence out of their vagrancy'.¹¹ In this report there were many testimonies that described the Irish vagrant which ranged in tone between one of animosity to one of sympathy for their condition.¹² This one hundred and twelve page document was replete with references to Irish vagrants and demonstrated with vigour the level of concern about the Irish problem. When he provided evidence to the committee John Christian, the Cumberland magistrate referred to in Chapter 2, spoke as a lone voice in his sympathy for Irish vagrants in his court room, but the dilemma remained when the question was asked, where are they to go? In his prelude to the report Chetwynd emphasised the nature of the current legislation designed to deal with vagrancy

⁹ 1837, *Report of George Nicholls on the Poor Laws of Ireland*, pp.5-6.

¹⁰ 1821 (543), *Report from the Select Committee on Existing Laws Relating to Vagrants*.

¹¹ D. R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹² 1821 (543), *Report from Select Committee*, p.55-56. [See also, *The relief of the Poor Act* (59 Geo. III c.12) which allowed the passage of the Irish and the Scotch poor, of whom Sturgess-Bourne's words were, 'at present these persons are committed as vagrants'. Under the law these persons should have been punished as vagrants before being passed for removal].

saying, ‘the country is plundered, the law is violated and its object unattained in a majority of cases..... The vagrant seldom reaches the parish to which he or she *really* belongs and is rarely detained by parish officers if he does’. Whether John Christian’s sympathy is misplaced or not, wives and children of Irish husbands who claimed relief were living in a state of insecurity and perhaps fear that they would be removed far from their home without any means of support, as outlined in some detail in the previous chapter. At the time of this enquiry the far north had experienced rising costs for the passing of vagrants between 1818 and 1821, demonstrated by the figures presented in the ‘Accounts of the Sums’ as almost quadrupling.¹³ Any concerns must have contributed to the momentum which led to the 1824 Vagrancy Act and the need to consolidate all the previous legislation into some form of workable solution.¹⁴ This Act, with all its ramifications, is still on the statute book and used on a daily basis in our society to ‘clear the streets of individuals who exist on the margins of society. Ten years later, in the run-up to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, a series of reports were commissioned to deal with the problem. In 1828, a report examined costs and numbers of Irish and Scotch vagrants and how to deal with them under the Law with an emphasis on the evil effects of the ‘eruption of the pauper population of Ireland’ on the labouring classes of England and the failure to impose a system of passing vagrants.¹⁵ With overall costs on Poor Law relief payments at more than three times the rate in the south of England as they were in the north, any savings that could be made on accommodation of vagrants would be welcomed by the authorities. Cole and Postgate’s computations on this theme provided the basis for further research by Roger Swift, Frank Neal and Keith Snell when they mapped the geographical spread across England and Wales of Poor Law Expenditure per head of population. Figure 2.1 (p.53) illustrates the contrast between the high spending southern counties supported by the allowance system, which subsidised wages in the agricultural regions, and the low spending northern counties. Lancashire stands alone as the only county spending less than five shillings per head whilst the far north is in the next lowest spending category of five shillings per head. The same topic was addressed again in a government report of 1833 dedicated to the exclusive consideration of the Irish Vagrant.¹⁶ The emphasis was now on the Irish identity of the vagrant which added to the perception of the vagrant as not simply someone who was destitute, but someone who was also *Irish*. These two reports use the term ‘vagrant’ throughout, although legally some may have been paupers having

¹³ 1821 (543), *Report from the Select Committee*, p.74.

¹⁴ 1824 (332), Vagrancy Act (5 Geo. 4, c. 83), *An Act for the punishment of idle and disorderly persons, rogues, and vagabonds in that part of Great Britain called England*.

¹⁵ 1828 (513), *Report from the Select Committee on the Laws Relating to Irish and Scotch Vagrants*.

¹⁶ 1833 (394), *Report of the Select Committee on Irish Vagrants*.

claimed relief, which made them liable to removal to their legal place of settlement under the 1819 Act.¹⁷ In this, witnesses testified regarding numbers and means of removal of vagrants from eleven counties. Lancashire was included, together with others in the south and midland areas of the country, but for some unknown reason witnesses from the far north were not asked to attend. Considering the number of vagrants in the far north this was an inexplicable omission. Felman and Lamb, in their ground-breaking work on ‘historical reality’ suggest that, ‘witness testimony gives access to an historical reality beyond the reaches of the work of historians’, which provided the historian with testimony from the very bottom rather than somewhere above or in between.¹⁸ No such witnesses were called from the ranks of workhouse inmates to give evidence, which leaves a void in the historians’ perception of the reality of the life of the poor. What we are left with is the perception of those who thought they understood the lives of those they managed. Their evidence was provided and accepted verbatim by the Committee as an honest and truthful picture of reality, with no shortage of witnesses who provided evidence of the characteristics of the migrants and the influence they were having on the English labouring class. Moreover, it was vagrant women who compounded the problem for the authorities as they struggled to find practical and moral answers for the reasons that forced women to wander as beggars in order to survive.

3 (iii) *Female vagrancy*

There were several factors which drew Irish women to the far north: geographical proximity, and employment prospects at wages at two or three times the rate in Ireland. Alongside these geo-economic factors young men were emigrating in large numbers which reduced marriage prospects for Irish who were prepared to risk this journey of uncertainty with the hope of a better future. The prospect of an alternative life and the coveted status of wife and mother in their own homes made the risks and uncertainty of emigration worth taking.¹⁹ Kith and kin connections of chain migration gave some degree of insurance against destitution and employment as house servants for the growing business class was a major source of employment which allowed them to work in jobs which they had previous experience of such as charwomen, washerwomen, domestic servants and street sellers.²⁰ They had different things to deal with than

¹⁷ Audrey Eccles, *Vagrancy and the Old Poor Law* (Farnham, 2012), p. 64.

¹⁸ Adam Piette and Mark Rawlinson (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to twentieth century British and American war literature* (Edinburgh, 2012), p.127.

¹⁹ Janet Nolan, ‘The Great famine and women’s emigration from Ireland’, in M. Crawford, *The Hungry Stream, Essays on Emigration and Famine* (Belfast, 1997), p.64.

²⁰ Francis Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice: A Study of Irish Immigrants in York, 1840-1875* (Cork, 1982), p.100; Frank Neal, ‘The Foundations of the Irish Settlement in Newcastle upon Tyne: The Evidence in the 1851 Census’,

men in both the domestic and public sphere and they were more likely to find themselves destitute at all stages in their lives. They were less likely to marry and remarry than men and less able to support themselves through employment than men due to limited work opportunities. Desertion, a potentially catastrophic and fearful eventuality, often left women alone with children to care for.²¹ As already outlined in some detail in chapter two, scant attention was given to the condition of those on the road, or to the numbers of women and children who accompanied the male tramps. They were seen as a separate problem for the authorities who had a range of ideas about the way in which they colluded, connived and manipulated the system for their own ends. Perhaps the most pernicious effect of the cultural norms of society during this period was the necessity for women to demonstrate not only extreme need but also virtue, independence and a lack of ties to people with suspect morality.²² All these issues were ignored by the Poor Law Commissioners and there is evidence that this led to wide differences between the way in which men and women were allocated relief.²³

Women with families, whatever their origin in Britain, were respectable provided they remained with the family. Once out on the road as vagrants, deranged by lack of food or the ability to care for their children, or alone, pregnant and looking for help, they were dubious and untrustworthy in the eyes of the observer. The situation by 1847, in the wake of the Irish Famine catastrophe, had become so serious that four inspectors of the newly formed Poor Law Board were asked to prepare an accurate assessment of the vagrancy problem in England and Wales by reporting on responses to questionnaires sent out to all Boards of Guardians. The Chairman of the committee, W. D. Boase, produced a document which attempted to ‘ascertain by personal investigation the real character and conduct of the class of persons now in enjoyment of casual relief’.²⁴ The use of the word ‘enjoyment’ speaks volumes about the writer and his appreciation of the condition of the claimant. He went on to provide his own classification of the vagrant along the same lines as Henry Mayhew adopted about a year later. These ranged on Boase’s spectrum from the ‘sturdy English mendicant’ to the ‘disgustingly filthy and vermin infested Irish vagrant’. He commented that, ‘the Irish form by far the majority of the applicants for casual relief’ and supported this by his visit to the Stafford workhouse where he enumerated the Irish

in D. M. MacRaild, (2000), p.137; Jerome Farrell, *The Irish in Hammersmith and Fulham in 1851*, p.138; Lynn Hollen Lees, *Exiles of Erin* (Manchester, 1979), p.96.

²¹ S & B Webb, in A. Eccles, *Vagrancy and the Old Poor Law*, p.175.

²² Glen Matthews, ‘The search for a cure for vagrancy in Worcestershire 1870-1920’, *Midland History*, 11 (1996), pp.100-116.

²³ Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers, The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998), pp.196-209, 217-230.

²⁴ 1847-48 (987), *Reports and Communications on Vagrancy*, p.15.

occupants of the casual wards as forty seven out of the sixty-nine occupants.²⁵ His report presented the problem of vagrancy therefore, as a problem generated by the 'Irish' not by the 'poor'. Irish female vagrants were referred to with the same moral indignation as so many previous reports had done, targeted in what appeared to be a bid to add to the tone of the report. One master of the workhouse sets the Irish female vagrant apart from the common vagrant as 'more filthy than the men. The younger Irish women appear to be generally prostitutes, many of them have the venereal disease severely'.²⁶ Boase reinforced this assessment by saying, 'I might fill many pages with such details of the same disgusting effect'. He concluded that the idea of policing the vagrants, as the Cockermouth Union had recommended and implemented is 'not only the most obvious, but the most proper course which I can suggest' and he urged 'the necessity that it should be uniform and universal in its application'.²⁷ This was a recommendation that had so far eluded the most vigorous efforts of the policy makers and Guardians despite the alleged efficacy of the 'Cockermouth system'. However, the Cockermouth Union recorded no reference to the Irish in their report to the Board, but concentrated on the procedure for dealing with all vagrants.²⁸ The dual identity of the vagrant as 'Irish' had been avoided in the far north on this occasion.

Particularly relevant was the lack of clarity which allowed the law to be used to deal with other crimes and led to women being arrested for offences related to vagrancy, such as prostitutes wandering the streets. Female criminality was judged by its moral menace, whereas male criminality was judged by its danger to the public and its economic costs. 'The psychological response to female criminals was (and still is) founded on earlier deeply moralistic theories about what constituted normality and what constituted deviance in women.'²⁹ As a result the increased regulation of social procedures served to augment the power of the judiciary and used it to greater effect against poor women.³⁰ This was the crucial difference in the attitudes towards women which were based on gender and respectability, unlike those of men.

In the far north one vagrant woman, who gave birth to an illegitimate child and abandoned it in the custody of the workhouse in Berwick-upon-Tweed, left the guardians at a

²⁵ 1847-48 (987), *Reports and Communications on Vagrancy*, p.16

²⁶ 1847-48 (987), *Reports and Communications on Vagrancy*, p.18.

²⁷ 1847-48 (987), *Reports and Communications on Vagrancy*, p.46-47.

²⁸ 1847-48 (987), *Reports and Communications on Vagrancy*, p.53.

²⁹ L. Zedner, *Women, crime and custody in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1991), p.300.

³⁰ Philippa Levine, 'Consistent Contradictions: Prostitution and Protective Labour Legislation in Nineteenth-Century England', *Social History*, 19, 1(1994), p.31.

loss to know how to deal with the costs incurred (16s 10d), so they wrote to the Poor Law Board who directed them to pay the amount from the Common Fund of the Union.³¹

A powerful influence on retarding the improvement of the Irish settlers in Great Britain, is the unthrifty and dissolute character of the women; as it is on the wife that the care of the house and the training of the children, chiefly depend among the poor. The Irish women are likewise, for the most part, not only wasteful and averse to labour, but also ignorant of the arts of domestic economy, as sewing and cooking. 'The Irish employed by me are in general sober, but the wives are noted drunkards'. Sometimes they marry Scotch girls who are respectably connected and thus improve their breed.³²

By today's criteria this judgment would of course be considered inappropriate, racist, bigoted and sexist but in 1835 George Cornwall Lewis, for the most part, accepted these testimonies as valid contributions to his final report. This report was to have extended influence in the history of the development of the Poor Law, particularly with regard to attitudes and methodology adopted by the local authorities in their approach to managing the administration of relief.

3 (iv) *Management of vagrants and the poor*

Bishop Scott, a key witness called to give evidence for Cornwall Lewis' report on the State of the Irish in Britain, felt bound to highlight what he perceived as the real concerns of many Irish on the road:

There are some Irish Vagrants who infest the high roads of England and Scotland, who doubtless come over; as has already been remarked, with a sincere design to get employment, and having once having had recourse to mendicancy, found the trade too gainful and too agreeable to be lightly relinquished.³³

Such views were not uncommonly expressed by local elites. They inhabited worlds which were in many ways markedly different to those upon whom they passed judgement, but their perceptions are important because they influenced the responses to vagrancy at local level. The authorities in towns of west Cumberland however were on the constant lookout for the means to minimise their risks and costs by imposing examination and obstacles in the way of those who were considered imposters. For W. H. Hawley, a guardian in the Whitehaven Union, the problem was not confined to migrant vagrants:³⁴

³¹ TNA, MH12/8981-102, *Letter from Poor Law Board to Berwick-upon-Tweed Guardians*, 4 October 1851.

³² 1835(40), *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*, p. xiii.

³³ 1835(40), *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*, p. xix, Appendix, p.85.

³⁴ R. Thompson, unpublished thesis, 'The New Poor Law in Cumberland and Westmorland: 1834-1871', Newcastle University (1976), p.556.

It was not so much the unsophisticated Irish who worried him, but a ‘class of English mendicants’ encouraged by the English recession in the economy who, were found more difficult to deal with, being for the most part persons of previously worthless character for whom prison had no terror, and who set all law and authority at defiance.³⁵

This statement warned of the terror of beggars on the loose who threatened the very fabric of society. No figures or police reports gave credibility to Hawley’s letter, but public alarm about the refugees described was graphically portrayed by Robert Rawlinson, Public Health Inspector, in his detailed report earlier in the same year on the state of the Whitehaven poor and in particular the state of the Irish poor.³⁶ There was sufficient fuel in this report to generate a sense of alarm and prompt Hawley to write to the Poor Law Board. Rawlinson believed, as many did, that ‘to give to the undeserving is to foster iniquity and crime in the worst forms’.³⁷ Whitehaven’s trustees were reluctant to accept his findings which, they claimed, did not present an up to date picture of the state of the poor in in the town.³⁸ The lodgings, particularly Irish lodgings, frequented by vagrants, were depicted as ‘scenes which beggared description in their deplorable wretchedness’ by the inspector and were excused by the trustees as ‘the habits of northern people, which were different to those of the south’.³⁹ Even in nineteenth-century terms this assessment is difficult to accept.

Uppermost in the Commissioners’ minds was the need to provide as smooth a transition as possible from the Old Poor Law to the New Poor Law and the means to bring this process about was crucial. At the first meeting of the Newcastle Board of Guardians in October 1836 the minutes of the meeting recorded, ‘The Poor Law Commissioners were very much disposed to leave it very much to the Board of Guardians and they did not feel it necessary to lay down strict rules...as in the south of England’.⁴⁰ This was perhaps an expectation that the far north would proceed with compliance and passivity rather than resistance and protest when compared

³⁵ TNA, MH12/32/40, *Correspondence, W. H. Hawley to Poor Law Board*, 29 February 1848, in Thompson thesis, p. 556.

³⁶ Robert Rawlinson (1849), *A Report of the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water, and Sanitary Conditions of the Inhabitants of the Town of Whitehaven*, p.13. [see also a detailed commentary in *Cumberland Pacquet and Whare’s Whitehaven Advertiser*, 6 Feb 1849].

³⁷ Rawlinson Report (1849), p.60. *Some detail of the dialogue which took place between the Trustees of the Health Board and Mr Rawlinson and the personal visits he had made to the homes of the poor, are examined in chapter 4.*

³⁸ Discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

³⁹ Rawlinson Report (1849).

⁴⁰ TWRO, 359/1/1, *Newcastle Poor Law Union, Board of Guardians’ Book of Minutes*, 7 October 1836. [It was resolved at the following meeting a week later (14 October 1836) that the Union be better managed by division into three districts: Western, Central and Eastern. Confident that the Commissioners would be agreeable to this decision, an allocation of the thirty-four elected Guardians from the respective parishes across the three districts was agreed. This concurs with M. A. Richardson, *Newcastle and Gateshead Directory*, 1838].

to the more volatile south with its history of disturbances. The Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, William Voules, was charged with managing this transition and establishing the new Poor Law regime in Cumberland as smoothly as possible. On an advisory visit to the Whitehaven Parish Council Meeting, he observed that they ought to have some means of testing the wants of the able-bodied paupers who sort the protection of the workhouse, 'They ought to find some sort of employment which was less desirable than that to be obtained out of doors'.⁴¹ Moving on to Carlisle he met a more hostile reception where he was 'most violently assaulted by an organised mob.'⁴² So the atmosphere in the North was not as 'quiet' as the authorities first thought and might not prove to be in the future.⁴³

The problem of vagrancy was always good material for newspaper which leapt at the opportunity to relay the message that the invasion of the Irish vagrants had become unmanageable. This rather long report from a Carlisle newspaper served to highlight the dilemma faced by those in poverty and the state of destitution in which they found themselves:

The Public Office - Carlisle - Thursday Last, before the Rev. J. Jenkins, the Rev. H. Lowther, the Rev. R. Parkinson, others, and a full bench of Magistrates. John Parkinson, a sturdy Irish beggar from Bolton in Lancashire, was committed to a month's imprisonment as a rogue and vagabond for persisting to beg in the town, after having been relieved by the police with a ticket for bed and food. Robert Wilkinson, another obstinate and pertinacious beggar, was also committed for a month to hard labour, as one of a gang of vagrants who have lately infested the town. The superintendent of police reported that lately he had been in the habit of having as many applications for lodgings and supper as from years ago. Something ought to be done to put a stop to such an alarming state of things or the inhabitants would have all their substance eaten up by the poor's rates.⁴⁴

A ticket for bed and food was the maximum benefit allowed in Cumberland in 1849. Any alms offered or a penny in the hat for playing the fiddle, was illegal, unless by a licensed performer. The reward, in John Parkinson's case, was a month's imprisonment with the illustrious title of 'rogue and vagabond' appended to his name. Tickets for 'bed and food' were running at twelve to eighteen per night, and the Rev Robert Wilkinson had become anxious that 'the inhabitants of the town would have all their substance eaten up by the poor's rates'. With the fears of the

⁴¹ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 'Report on the Poor Law Guardians Meeting', 13 Mar 1836.

⁴² TNA, MH32/73, *Letter - Voules to Lefevre*, 1 Oct 1836 and 21 Jan 1837 in A. Brundage, p151, p.155.

⁴³ For further accounts of the transition in the Newcastle area see correspondence between Walsham and Lefevre, 23 Sept 1836, MH32/76; Norman McCord, 'The Implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on Tyneside', *International Review of History*, 14 (1969), pp.90-108; J. Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 New Poor Law* (London, 1986); N. C. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834-44* (Manchester, 1971).

⁴⁴ *Cumberland Pacquet*, and *Ware's Industrial Advertiser*, 27 March 1849.

clergy in Carlisle so well defined on the magistrates' bench the judiciary seemed hard-pressed to exercise any sympathy for the vagrants' plight.

The problem for more remote regions was inevitably the branding which so easily fell from the pen of men like Nichols, Ribton Turner and Mayhew and were eagerly taken up by the press and the authorities. Whitehaven and Tynemouth may have had the squalor and urban deprivation similar to the metropolitan areas but could not be compared with the scale of population, the economy and the weight of numbers claiming relief on a casual or longer-term basis. However, rate payers in small towns like these often paid a substantial proportion more of their collected revenue than the more densely occupied towns further south. It was this important factor which meant economies of scale were a preoccupation for the Boards of Guardians of the union districts in the far north.

The Carlisle Board of Guardians were aware of the options for vagrants but their objectives were to minimise inconvenience for themselves and maximise efficiency in dealing with them. A committee meeting, reported in some detail by the local press, raised concerns on the subject, which were bound to attract the attention of the public:

it would serve a most useful purpose if the police registered daily (as far as practicable) the whole number of vagrants who pass through the city, also the number of inmates staying nightly in the common lodging houses, with estimate of the sums paid to them for lodgings, and otherwise expend. The police could reveal some very curious and startling facts respecting the schemes and practices of professional vagrants. They would inform the Corporation how that vagrancy is a systemised trade, or rather profession; founded, in every branch upon falsehood, deceit, and fraud. The professional vagrant is a beggar and thief by turns, as it may suit his or her purpose, but always an imposter of the worst kind, as he converts the pure stream of charity into the means of sin and corruption.⁴⁵

Not forgetting what has been said about the identity of vagrants in previous chapters, it would not be unreasonable to attach the nationality of Irish and or Scots to some of these individuals as they passed through this border town, but the Guardians were not inclined to report on their identity. The article provided the notion that vagrants possessed distinctive characteristics of poverty of the worst kind. For the Guardians, the preferred option in managing the vagrants was by law enforcement. Vagrants would be required to register as they entered the city limits; numbers and costs of all those who occupied lodging houses would be recorded by the police; the police would maintain some check on their whereabouts and numbers. This would also enable the police to supervise the activities of the vagrants in the lodging houses and report back

⁴⁵ *Carlisle Journal*, 21 June 1850.

to the ‘Corporation’ [Town Council, Board of Guardians], in whatever terms they preferred regarding the character and immorality of these people. The article concluded with a phrase which captured the definition of the marginality of the vagrant in an environment which generated the sense that the vagrant had the power to transpose the good works (pure stream) of middle class charity into illegal activities (sin and corruption). The characteristics of this group of people, identified and classified without concern for individuality, were the perceived image of the wandering vagrant. The authorities’ attitude to this manifestation of poverty appeared to have hardened in the far north perhaps because they were hard pressed to manage the numbers on their door-step and feared the backlash of their rate-paying towns-people. There may have been some justification for this when comparing the figures for the two counties, which in 1851 were 5.1% (9,866) of the population in Cumberland and 4.2% (12,666) in Northumberland when compared to the national average in England of 2.98%.⁴⁶

At Brampton, ten miles west of Carlisle, records from 1846 onwards provide a picture of increasing occupancy of the casual wards for one night on a bed of dry straw before the next leg of the journey. Despite the seemingly accurate records in the workhouses’ ‘Form A’ returns to the Poor Law Board, nationalities were not recorded. It would have been almost certain that some of these ‘tramps/vagrants’ were Irish or Scots. Frustratingly, all that can be computed are the pauper overall occupancy totals and the numbers of vagrants as a percentage of the sum totals.

	In-door paupers	Out-door paupers	Vagrants	% of total	Totals
1846	86	1001	72	6.2	1159
1847	104	1104	169	13.2	1277
1848	102	1115	71	5.9	1200
1849	108	1107	64	5.0	1279
1850	112	1390	41	2.6	1543
1851	111	1455	19	1.2	1585

Table 3.1: Vagrants, tramps and paupers in Brampton workhouse, 1846-1851.⁴⁷

The main point to note from Table 3.1 is the decline in numbers of vagrants alongside the growing numbers of outdoor paupers and the fairly stable number of indoor paupers. Perhaps

⁴⁶ D. M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration, The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool, 1998), Table 2.3, p.38. [see also: Marshal and Walton, *Lakes Counties*, p.37, ‘Pauperism in the region in the 1830s was generally low when compared to other parts of the country. Population rose but slowly, 0.4% p.a. compared to 1.2% for rural England’; R. Price Williams, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, xliii, 1880, Table E, pp. 482-3].

⁴⁷ TNA, MH12/8980 & 8981, *Records of Vagrants and Tramps and Paupers - 6th week of quarter ending on Lady day, Berwick-upon-Tweed* (19 Feb 1850).

more significantly was the continuous decline in the proportion of vagrants, despite their increasing numbers, from a maximum of 13.2% in that black year of 1847, to 1.2% in 1851. This is the statistic that would have been used by the authorities to demonstrate success in dealing with the problem, but the improvement in the national economy and the decline of the flow of immigrants could also have had some bearing on the figures. Brampton appeared to be a fairly popular resting place on the trail from Whitehaven to Tynemouth and this letter from Mr. Edward Hursh, Workhouse Inspector for the Poor Law Board, spelt out the possible reasons in this rather long but extremely valuable quote:

I inspected the Brampton workhouse on 13th inst and understand it is the practice for the relieving officer to give a ticket for the vagrants' ward to all who may apply. If this be correct it is most pernicious and repugnant to the law as laid down by the late Mr Buller in his minute on vagrancy [appendix to the First Annual Report of the Poor Law Board, p.29.] You will also note...it is very advisable that the persons of vagrants should be cleansed by placing them in the bath according to the Regulations of the Workhouse (see Art. 95) relating to ordinary inmates. Ordered that the Clerk write to Mr Hurst stating that the Guardians do not think it advisable to use the bath to casual poor only remaining on the House for one night. They also find that they [*the Guardians*] are at a much greater expense in forcing a task of work on vagrants and giving them breakfast than they used to be under the old arrangements and that the numbers are equally as large as they used to be under the present system as they were under the old".⁴⁸ [*Referring to the time when the relieving officer issued tickets*]

The 'late Mr Buller' had established such a reputation in the world of the Guardians' policy making that on the one hand much of what he said was acted upon and on the other hand it was found to be impossible to implement. Official circulars were distributed under his direction which suggested that 'the honest wayfarer in temporary distress might be given a certificate showing his circumstances, destination, object of journey, etc., upon production of which he was to be readily admitted to the workhouse'.⁴⁹ The administrative difficulties of managing this information meant that the Brampton Guardians adapted the directive by offering a ticket for a night's accommodation without insistence on any bathing, and provided breakfast without any enforcement of the stipulated hours of labour set out in the governments orders. Taking the view that these were more economic and humane alternatives, the Clerk informed the Inspector accordingly, notwithstanding the Poor Law Board's directives, which spelt out the behavioural practices that should be adopted.

⁴⁸ CRO, SPUB4/2, *Board of Guardians Meeting*, 27 Oct 1858.

⁴⁹ *Official Circular*, 17, July and August 1848, p.271, in Sydney and Beatrice Webb, *English Poor Law History*, Vol 1, Part 2, *The Last Hundred Years* (London, 1929), p.404.

Further examples of the way vagrants should be handled were provided in evidence to the Committee instructed to report on Vagrancy in 1852. Towns in the far north such as Cockermouth, Workington, Maryport and Keswick, directed that all tramps and vagrants should receive relief only from the police. If the police saw no objection after attempts to validate a claim, the vagrant was furnished with a 'ticket'. He took this ticket to the lodging house keeper with whom the police had made arrangements, and was then supplied with a bed and nothing more. The tickets were then reimbursed for their value at the end of the week and the police visited the lodging house each night to monitor the activity.⁵⁰ This directive was seen to be the most cost effective and competent way to regulate the vagrants rather than relying on the relieving officers judgement.⁵¹ In addition the applicants for casual ward relief were less inclined to request accommodation from the police, which to some degree acted as a deterrent to applicants and reduced the relieving Officer's decision-making responsibility. The problems for the police authority were outlined in the Police Report to the Select Committee in 1847:

We have very few Scotch prisoners; our prisoners are principally Irish, or persons born of Irish parents, resident in Cumberland. On average in the last seven years committals have been very high. In 1846, it was 144; last year it was 138.⁵²

The monitoring of common lodging houses may not have been systematic but it provided a relatively easy way to dispose of the vagrants rather than have them in the police station all night. The practice of police cell accommodation must have lapsed after this date as a further article in the newspaper in 1857 records that the Chief Constable, John Dunne, was asked to permit one of the police officers to take up the task as inspector of lodging houses.⁵³ Dealing with the causes of their predicament was not police work, all that was required was straightforward piece of paperwork to satisfy the Guardians that the landlord had undertaken to accommodate them.

In the east of the region there was some good news for the Commission's inspector John Walsham. He was so impressed by an old soldier's zeal in his record keeping of vagrant paupers in Berwick-upon-Tweed, that he wrote to the Poor Law Commission to commend him in devising a record book of vagrant paupers. He did this because he considered it useful to be adopted in other unions 'infested' with vagrants and enclosed one page of the book as an example with names and descriptions of casual poor relieved from 23 Mar 1840 to 26 July

⁵⁰ 1847-48 (987), *Reports and Communications on Vagrancy*, p.53.

⁵¹ *Whitehaven Herald*, 13 May 1848.

⁵² 1852-53 (603), *First report from the Select Committee on Police: with minutes of evidence*, testimony of T. Rodin, p.87.

⁵³ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 24 Aug 1857.

1840.⁵⁴ This provided a useful snapshot of vagrancy in the far north. His cumulative totals for all casual paupers were: 98 English, 208 Scots, 120 Irish of which 38 were vagrants listed as: 14 English, 17 Scots and 7 Irish. Comparing the ratios of the three groups:

	English	Scots	Irish
Pauper totals	98	208	120
Vagrant Totals	14	17	7
Factored pauper totals	1	2.0	1.2
Factored vagrant Totals	1	1.2	0.5

It can readily be seen that there were twice as many Scots as English paupers, and 1.2 times as many Irish as English paupers. Vagrants were counted as 1.2 times as many Scots as English and half as many Irish as English. The Scots were therefore the dominant group in these figures, and outnumbered both English paupers and English vagrants. This undermined the evidence to Select Committees and the newspaper reports in places like Berwick-upon-Tweed, where the Board of Guardians claimed that the Irish were the most troublesome factor on their agenda.

The Tynemouth workhouse vagrant records provided a more vivid picture of how the migrants' journey evolved. During the first critical years of the famine, 'seeking employment' was the reason logged in the register of vagrants for their overnight stay. To ensure that no sympathy was wasted on the wandering Irish labour force in this part of the region the *Newcastle Journal* published extracts from an address given by the Bishop of Dublin who made the case for maintaining the impoverishment of the Irish labourer:

...they were accustomed to work hard, were always on the verge of ruin, and were content with the barest necessities of life. Supply them with those necessities and they would not work at all, and their habits of industry would be destroyed for ever.⁵⁵

Articles like this, written by one of their own countrymen, an Irish bishop, on the subject of Irish character must have been welcomed by the authorities who were keen to drive the message home that migrants were a drain on the public purse. The editor went on to add that the Morpeth workhouse, twelve miles north of Tynemouth, had received 6,061 vagrants who 'had claimed relief in the immense influx of Irish into the town during the last three months...the guardians

⁵⁴ TNA, MH 12/8976/215, Folio 357-358, 'Letter from Sir John Walsham', Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, 18 Sept 1840 [Figures 3.7 and 3.8, Appendix].

⁵⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 2 April 1847.

reckon this is nearly double the amount it has usually been, of which fifty-one per cent were Irish'.⁵⁶ Some measure of the exaggeration by the press can be gathered by looking at the rate of increase of each group. The January to March 1847 figures indicated an overall increase in numbers of 90%, of which 23% were Irish and 26% were Scots, far less than the newspaper had reported. Several lodging houses in Morpeth on Newgate Street and Market Place listed vagrants among their guests which suggested there was some preference for housing those who passed through to be accommodated outside of the workhouse by arrangement with the lodging house keepers and the police. Tynemouth, on the other hand, had accommodation in the workhouse casual ward, and because of the numbers who required relief, was probably the Board of Guardians' preferred arrangement rather than the lodging house.

	Irish Vagrants	Scots Vagrants	All Vagrants
Jan-June 1845	21	98	284
Jan-June 1846	33	168	313
Jan-March 1847	139 (23%)	154 (26%)	594

Table 3.2: Irish and Scots vagrants in Tynemouth workhouse, 1845-47.⁵⁷

Table 3.2 shows the surge in vagrant numbers from January 1845 to March 1847 but most importantly it also shows the number of Scots vagrants as far exceeding the Irish, even through the critical months of 1846-47 when the Irish famine was generally attributed to any increased numbers and costs. This was probably due to the time lapse between their embarkation in Whitehaven and their arrival in Tynemouth after the 110-mile journey east across the country. Any reference to Scots vagrants in the press is conspicuously absent at a time when the Irish problem, was simultaneously a Scots' one of even greater magnitude.

3 (v) *Moving around the region*

Some sense of the scale of movement and workhouse usage by migrants will prove useful here. The Tynemouth vagrant register provided 'Coming from' and 'Going to' details of each claimant with the majority of both Scots and Irish moving either south on their journey, after a night at the Morpeth workhouse, or north on their journey after a night at the Tynemouth

⁵⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, 1 May 1847; Frank Neal, *Black 47*, p.206. [There were no surviving records of Morpeth's Board of Guardians Minute Books for this period].

⁵⁷ TWRO, MH12/9158/113, Folios 157-158, *Tynemouth Workhouse Vagrant Register*, 1845-47.

workhouse. Prospects in each direction appeared to be equally viable for the labourer and his family, and the large numbers of women and children suggested whole families on the move.

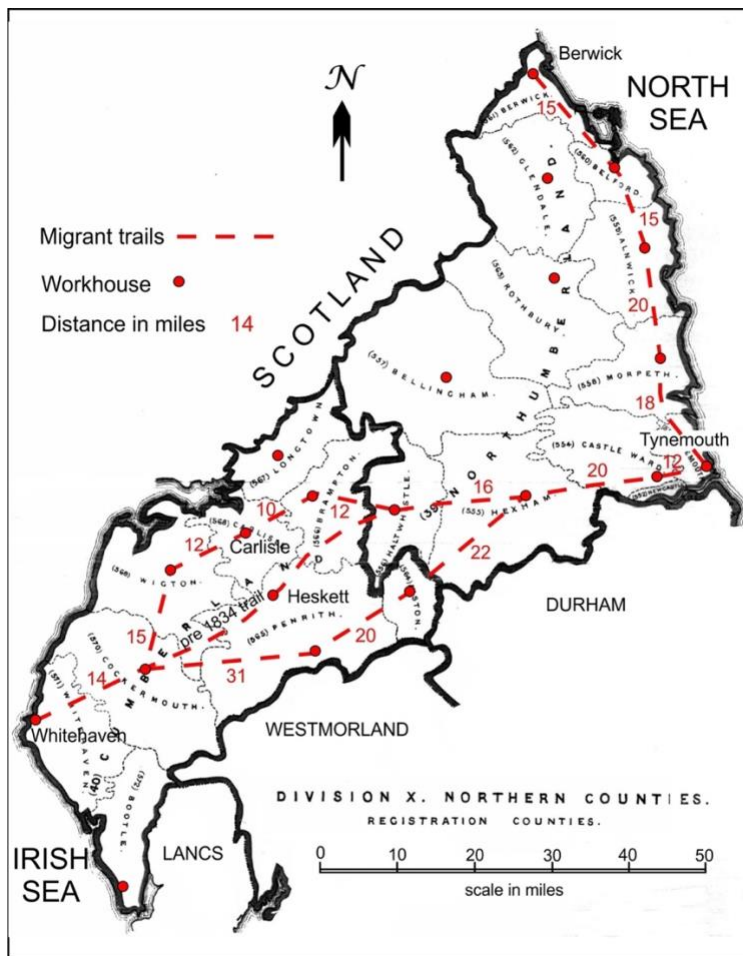


Figure 3.1: Migrant trail routes across the far north from Whitehaven to Tynemouth and Tynemouth to Berwick.⁵⁸

What seems to be a mixture of expectations in either direction could possibly be accounted for by the promise of accommodation by kith or kin or simply disappointment that no work could be found in one location or another. A more detailed picture can be gained by looking at migrant movement from the west to the east of the region, made possible by the location of workhouses on the migrant trails indicated in Figure 3.1. The northerly trail from Whitehaven passed through Cockermouth, Wigton, Carlisle, Brampton, Haltwhistle, Hexham, and Ponteland, and shows distances between ten and twenty miles that needed to be tramped in one day from workhouse to workhouse. The southerly trail passed through Cockermouth, Penrith, Alston, Hexham and

⁵⁸ CRO, *Registration Counties Map, Poor Law Union Districts, Division X, Northern Counties*, 1851.

Ponteland and required more fortitude to tramp distances between twelve and thirty-one miles in one day. The distance from Cockermouth to Penrith (thirty-one miles), a formidable distance for a family group, would have meant an overnight stop in a barn or in the open. The more central trail and the most direct route between Cockermouth and Haltwhistle, was a sixty-mile tramp which would have been too much for any but the most hardy. Prior to 1834 it made use of the workhouse at Hesket, between Carlisle and Penrith, but this was closed soon after 1834 and made this route an option only for those who were prepared to sleep rough wherever they could find shelter. The question remained however, were the Irish and Scots paupers provided with relief in the workhouse over and above the casual stop? From what has already been said about the fear of removal by migrants acting as a deterrent to migrant relief applicants, a survey of workhouse occupancy across the whole region would answer this question.

Data was extracted from the census records from 1841-1861 for each Union District across the entire region, a total of twenty workhouses. These records do not reveal the normal pattern of life in the history of the workhouse occupancy nor do they offer a wholly accurate picture of numbers of individuals, but on the other hand they are a reasonable and historically valuable aid in forming an 'assessment count' of occupancy.⁵⁹ Census reports prior to 1841 are unreliable, particularly with respect to birth place information, but overall numbers of inmates and the rate of increase are trustworthy.⁶⁰ None of the records of course included those sleeping rough in barns, tents and the open air which indicates the limitations of the enumeration on census night with respect to vagrants. However, several examples were found in the 1851 census of the Morpeth workhouse where an Irish vagrant family of six spent the night, and in the Tynemouth workhouse where seven men classified as vagrants from Ireland and Scotland spent the night.

Some further difficulties arose when attempting to assess 'averages'. First, there were considerable variations in workhouse overall total numbers which ranged from less than twenty to over a hundred; second, some workhouses had no records of Irish or Scots paupers resident on the night of the census; third, statistical mean values across these ranges did not provide a realistic assessment of the wider picture, particularly when outlying extreme values are included such as the Belford Union figures in Northumberland, which recorded four Scots paupers (26.7%) out of a total of eleven paupers. Using median values takes account of the extremes more effectively by comparing mid-range values but with up to four workhouses having no Irish

⁵⁹ E. Higgs, *Census Revisited* (London, 2005), p.75.

⁶⁰ Arthur Redford, *Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850* (Manchester, 1976), p.10.

or Scots inmates on several census dates in both Cumberland and Northumberland, comparisons would inevitably be distorted. One answer is to ignore those workhouses without Irish or Scots inmates and calculate the average based on those workhouses that do. For example, the 1841 Cumberland census recorded no Irish and Scots paupers in three workhouses: Alston, Bootle and Brampton, but twenty-two in the other six.⁶¹ Of significant interest here are the Brampton workhouse records, one of the stops for the tramp on the road to Tynemouth from Carlisle, which provided no indication of nationality until 1851 when there were detailed records of vagrant numbers who passed through on one night casual stops.

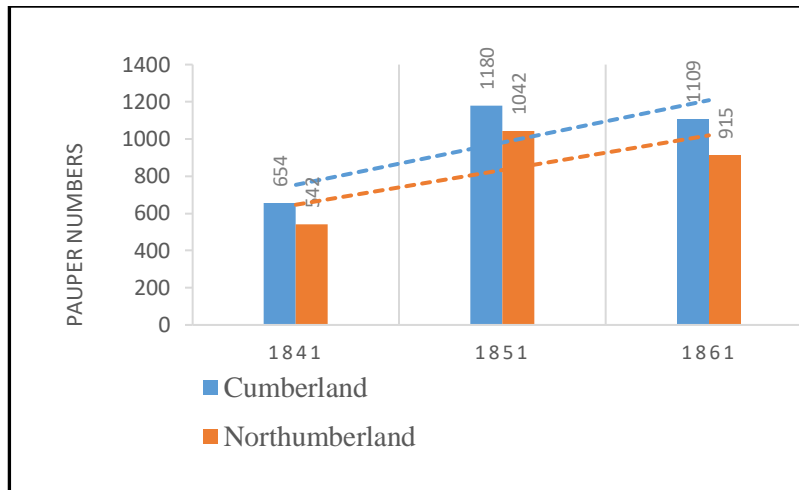


Figure 3.2: Irish and Scots paupers in workhouses in the far north ⁶²

For a broader picture across the region the similarity of growth rates of Scots and Irish pauperism in the two counties is immediately evident from Figure 3.2 during the twenty-year period. In the ten-year interval from 1841-51 the total number of inmates approximately doubled and thereafter remained around the same in 1861 with the total numbers of paupers in Cumberland consistently above Northumberland. The general trend lines are positive but within this there is a flattening of the line from 1851-61. A comparison of the towns Carlisle and Berwick-upon-Tweed was made on opposite sides of the region to provide a more specific perspective on urban circumstance (Figure 3.3). As the principal border towns on the western and eastern frontier with Scotland they had widely different populations: Carlisle around 30,000 and Berwick around 10,000. The development of their infrastructures in the road and house building sectors was strengthened by the extension of the growing rail network as it moved northwards, but this is as far as socioeconomic comparisons need go. For Carlisle, the trend was

⁶¹ *Census of England and Wales, Enumerators' Books*, HG107, RG9, 1841-61.

⁶² *Census of England and Wales, Enumerators' books*, HG107, RG9, 1841-61.

a positive growth in numbers of paupers whereas Berwick, after 1851, experienced a negative decline. Berwick must have welcomed this after the dramatic surge in numbers in 1851 which reached 2.3 in 1000 population when compared to Carlisle's 0.4 in 1000 population. By 1861 the numbers of Irish and Scots vagrants in Berwick's workhouse had halved whilst vagrant numbers in Carlisle's workhouse had doubled. Reasons for this would have been largely due to varying industrial demand, especially as the handloom textile trade went into decline, and migrant movement in the west continued to be swelled by the continuous influx from Ireland, a subject examined in more detail in chapter 6.

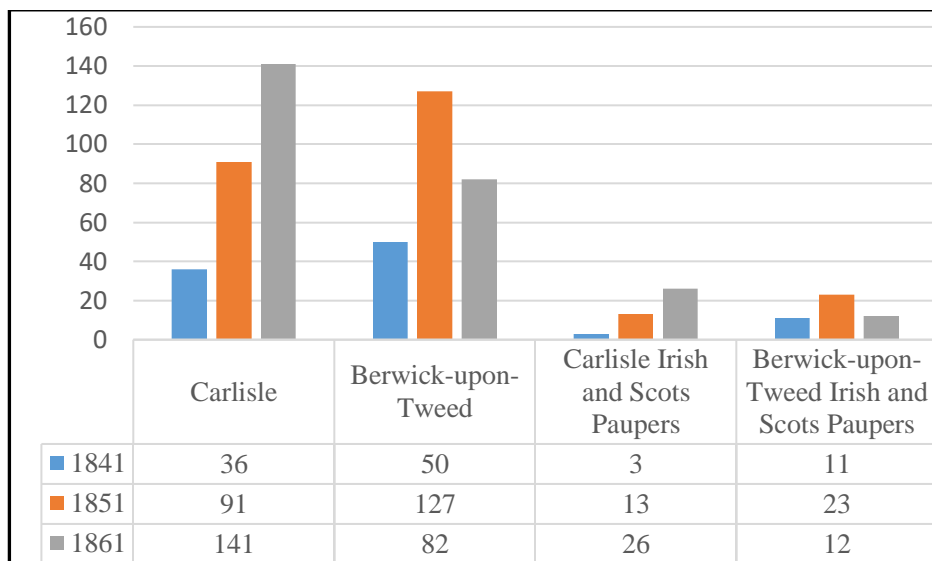


Figure 3.3: Paupers in workhouses in Carlisle and Berwick-upon-Tweed⁶³

In his report to the Police Review Committee, the Chief Constable provided statistics that showed Scots vagrants in Northumberland were more numerous than the Irish in three years out of the four between 1865 and 1868 (Figure 3.4). A survey of the *Berwick Journal* newspaper revealed his evident satisfaction, which was demonstrated by the repetition of the statement: 'your police continue to enforce the regulation for the suppression of vagrancy and have challenged or escorted them out of the district'.⁶⁴

⁶³ 1841-61 *Census Enumerator's Books*, HO 107, RG9.

⁶⁴ *Illustrated Berwick Journal*, 6 Oct 1865, p.2.

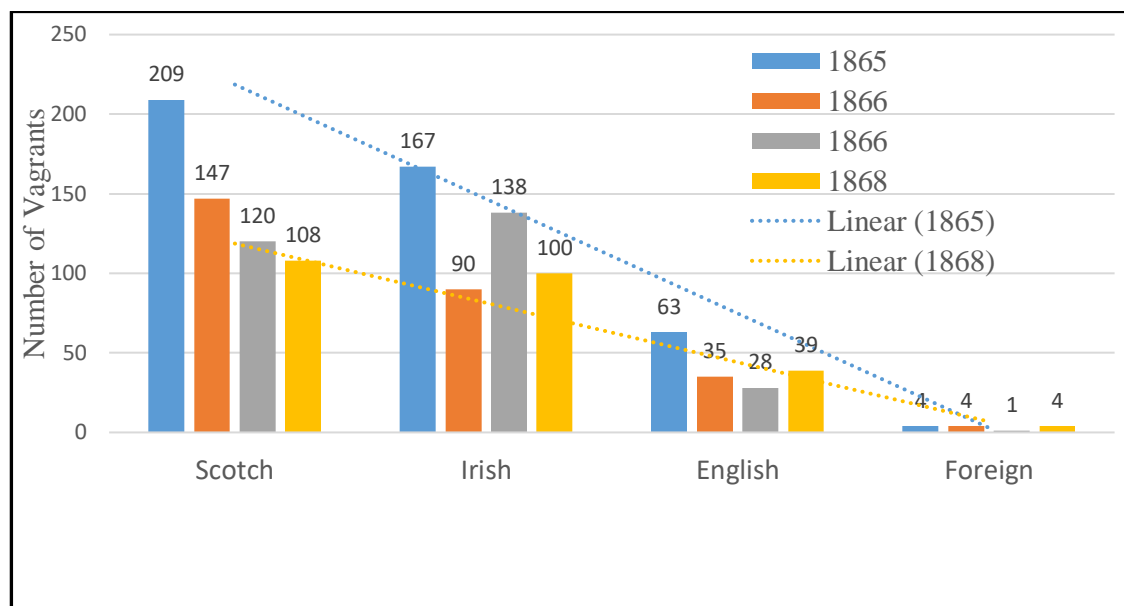


Figure 3.4: Scots, Irish, English and Foreign vagrants in Northumberland 1865-68⁶⁵

Moreover, to reinforce his success he had somehow managed to reverse the Irish/Scots workhouse occupancy levels in three out of five years in the period 1865-68. The Scots and the Irish vagrants outnumbered the English and other nationals, but for the Irish to take second place to the Scotch in the 'vagrancy league' was indeed significant given the emphasis that the newspapers and official reports paid to the Irish and the vagrancy problem. To avoid any speculation on potential future trends that may quite readily have changed direction with the intervention of the authorities, the report provided some responses to questions posed by Home Office officials. The decrease in the number of vagrants in the county was quoted with some conviction in an effort to provide some validation of the methodology in achieving it. As an outspoken critic of the system at local and national level, with fifty year's experience in the second half of the nineteenth century, John Dunne was an important contributor to the debate with trenchant views about the character of tramps. In his letter to the Home office he said, 'There is no doubt that 99 out of 100 tramps were professional mendicants and a large proportion of them were convicted thieves and lived on organised plunder'.⁶⁶ Dunne attributed his successful policing to a vigorous implementation of the 1824 Vagrancy Act, but applied caveats in response to written questioning by saying that,

⁶⁵ *Census Enumerators' books, 1865-1868.*

⁶⁶ TNA, HO 73/2, *Correspondence between the Home Office and the Chief Constable of Cumberland and Westmorland on Suppression of Vagrancy*, Appendix 3/5, p.3.

‘In the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions 1868, an average of 122 vagrants and tramps were relieved per day, down from 134 per day. No persons had been apprehended travelling along the road simply because they are shabbily dressed and having the appearance of tramping vagrants. When the police receive information of persons begging...they are taken to the house where they begged and when identified are taken to the lock-up.’⁶⁷

His definition of the ‘tramping vagrant’ as ‘all persons who are found travelling about the country without any visible means of subsistence or employment’ left the field wide open for the police to sweep up all those who may or may not have been on the search for work in the county. Perhaps the most interesting point here was the complete absence of any reference to the Irish or the Scots migrants on the road, when there was so much comment in the press on the topic, and his concern to play down the Irish problem, or perhaps he felt he had it so much under control that it was not worth referring to. Even more importantly for this study it gave some credence to the hypothesis that the newspapers had far less influence on officials than was supposed. Either way the Irish vagrants were not on John Dunne’s agenda at this time.⁶⁸

Some years earlier however, in the First Report from the Select Committee on Police, the Irish vagrant had been a priority on the list of offenders. The Governor of the county jail in Carlisle, Mr T. H. Redin, when questioned by the chairman, made the point that, ‘three fourths of our prisoners are strangers...principally Irish or persons born of Irish parents resident in Cumberland, with the number of vagrants passing through and sleeping one night in the year ending 1852, being 45,718’⁶⁹ This was not only an astonishing number and open to question as an error in print or record but it simultaneously equated the term ‘stranger’ with ‘vagrant’. Perhaps this was an unconscious association of terms, but the ease with which it was done demonstrates the continuity of cultural opprobrium for the migrant. He went on to comment on the situation in other parts of the county:

The eastern parts of Cumberland and the borders of Northumberland are infested with vagrants; robberies are rife, and the farmers frequently turn out in a gang and attempt to secure the depredators; but before they can be secured they have gone to the borders of Scotland and vanished from Cumberland.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ 1868 (158), *Vagrancy Act*, p.4.

⁶⁸ Alan Bryant, *Sir John Dunne, Cumbria’s first and most extraordinary Chief Constable* (Ulverston, 2014).

⁶⁹ 1852 (603), *First report from the Select Committee on Police: with minutes of evidence*. P.87.

⁷⁰ 1852 (603), Question, 1416, p. xxxvi, in J. D. Marshall, ‘Some aspects of the social history of Cumbria, crime, police, morals and the countryman’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, New Series, LXX, (1970), pp.221-246.

It appears from this statement that local rural crime in the middle of the nineteenth century in Cumberland was often managed by groups of vigilantes in the absence of an adequate police force that could cover the county. The rural tradition of hunting could easily be adapted to track down vagrants who had become widely known as the 'Irish'. Whatever the means employed in 1852, John Dunne had radically changed the scene by 1868 and provided other local authorities with guidelines to manage their vagrants through his wide-ranging involvement in public affairs including the Charities Organisations Society.⁷¹ It seems Cumberland was especially noted for its rigid management of the vagrant problem despite the reluctance on the part of some guardians and police to implement the law to the letter but the apparent success of Dunne's decisive policies was not 'enjoyed' across the country in other unions. The Poor Law Board continued to be disturbed by the steady growth of vagrancy as the number of reports and parliamentary papers have suggested.

3 (vi) *Conclusion*

The elusive nature of the vagrant creates obstacles for the historian in their efforts to capture the history of their lives. The many almost whispered assertions and government reflections on their condition, are hidden beneath the feelings and emotions of those wandering tramps and paupers who did not line up to be counted or have their voices recorded for posterity. Thus, this chapter has been based more on history, but nevertheless relied on a good deal of source material. The Irish and Scots poor were a mobile force, alongside the vast majority of labouring poor under pressure, often extreme, to provide for themselves and their families. They were frequently driven into serious difficulties through lack of settlement rights, threat of removal, famine in their homeland, marginalisation in society as redundant elements of industrial decline. The authorities were clear in their conviction that vagrants required controlling and managing. The problem however was how to control vagrants with economy and effect when, for a variety of reasons, they were perceived as a homogenous group in Victorian society, not as individuals with their own problems. They were portrayed in contemporary literature by writers such as Charles Dickens in the middle of the nineteenth century as caricatured distortions of humanity which were taken up, reinforced by the press and used as a barometer of public feeling.⁷² Vagrancy had become synonymous with criminality and

⁷¹ TNA, HO45/9613, *Report of Society for organising Charitable Relief and Suppressing Mendicity*, 'Methods of dealing with vagrancy', 1873.

⁷² Paul O'Leary, 'Mass commodity culture and identity: the *Morning Chronicle* and Irish migrants in a nineteenth-century Welsh industrial town', *Urban History*, 35, 2 (2008), pp. 237-254 [the minority Irish ethnic

the police reinforced this definition and image in their efforts to rid the countryside of the illegal practice of wandering without work or settlement. Alongside the middle classes they also 'shared a distaste for tramps and suspicious looking characters'.⁷³

The nineteenth century was a time when vagrancy became firmly associated with the Irish. The movement of the migrant population during the 1840s and 1850s, particularly during and after the Great famine and the adoption of strategies to ensure survival, left no alternatives for many but to beg or starve, sleep rough or face the scrutiny of the workhouse authorities. Most of all it was their powerlessness which severely limited their alternatives, especially if they were women who had different reasons for their destitution and fewer options in the male centred ideology which dominated society. Female criminality had far deeper implications than the crime per se, it was intensified by the stigma of deviance which compounded its effect. Roger Swift's observation that 'the experiences of Irish women in the far north is largely undocumented, mainly because sources are scarce', was justified in the light of the relatively few sources uncovered in the archives,⁷⁴ but Select Committees, newspaper reports and census enumerators' books were useful in evaluating attitudes, numbers of individuals and attempts to deal with the problem.

At central government level the underlying constant of the vagrant problem was thought to be the choice of lifestyle rather than a forced position into which they were driven by circumstance and structural reasons. There was minimal reference to these socio-economic factors by the commissioners or the poor law Guardians, but some evidence of the awareness of the failures of the system emerged at parish and local level, which pointed to reasons for the vagrants' condition other than criminality. By the time of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 some light had penetrated the dark maze of legislative bureaucracy which blamed the problem on commerce and manufacturers, on naval and military operations and settlement law, and which all too often had led to putting the poor and the sick travellers in gaols and correction centres.⁷⁵ Paul O'Leary asserts that rural Poor Law Unions were particularly fearful of the increase of Irish vagrants, and expressed alarm at the prospect of having to provide them with

identity was defined by observers in terms of exclusion from an emerging mass commodity culture and in opposition to the native working class]; D. M MacRaild, 'Irish immigration and the 'Condition of England' question: the roots of an historiographical tradition', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 14 (1995), pp. 67-85; Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (London, 1817, repr. 2002).

⁷³ B. Godfrey and P. Lawrence, *Crime and Justice, 1750-1950* (Devon, 2005), p.122.

⁷⁴ Roger Swift, 'Identifying the Irish in Victorian Britain: Recent trends in Historiography', *Immigrants and Minorities* (2009), 27, 2-3, pp.134-151.

⁷⁵ 1834 (219), Poor Law Act, XXXVIII, Appendix E, pp.80-4.

poor relief for an indefinite period.⁷⁶ Perhaps this anxiety and apprehension was due in part to distorted or exaggerated news from other towns filtering through to their localities.

The title of the chapter presupposes that the threat of Irish and Scots vagrancy was increasing and analysis of the data provided some evidence to refute this assertion but there was a significant presence of Irish and Scots migrants who could be, and often were, classified as ‘vagrants’. There were also consistently higher numbers of vagrants in Cumberland workhouses when compared with those in Northumberland workhouses, both of which raised major concerns for cost conscious authorities. Pauper numbers in these workhouses gave a strong indication that the Irish were proportionately more inclined to be inmates than their proportion in the population suggests *and* a strong trend upwards between 1841 and 1851 for both Irish and Scots inmates could perhaps be regarded as euphemism for ‘threat’. This was however not seen to be a problem by the Chief Constable, John Dunne.

Several reasons for the Irish and Scots migrants’ occupancy of the workhouses can be suggested, notwithstanding any fear of removal, for example: they were really settled under the five-year rule (provided they stayed in the same parish); numbers may not have been significant enough for the authorities to have worried about so they turned a blind eye; the authorities did not want people begging on the streets or even the scandal of people dying in a public place. It was often easier to take them in, give them soup at minimal cost and send them on their way. No pauper witnesses were called from the workhouse to give evidence, which therefore leaves a void in the historians’ perception of the reality of the life of the poor. What we are left with is the perception of those who thought they understood the lives of those they managed. Their evidence was provided and accepted verbatim by the various local and central government bodies as a picture of reality, not necessarily an honest and truthful one.

Henry Mayhew did not recognise this argument when he produced his articles for the *Morning Chronicle* in the late 1840s (later to be published in his book *London Labour and the Poor*). Vagrants in his view, ‘were a stream of vice and disease – a tide of iniquity and fever, continually flowing from town to town, from one end of the land to the other’.⁷⁷ His vivid portrayal of a life in poverty in the mid-nineteenth century and the waywardness of the ‘bottom class’ is well known with its references to the variations of begging and his assessment of vagrants requiring relief in the casual wards. This masterpiece of personal enquiry and observation is a classic account of London’s poor despite its failure to address the root causes

⁷⁶ Paul O’Leary, *Immigration and Integration* (Cardiff, 2000), p.83.

⁷⁷ *Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor, A Selection* in: Rosemary O’Day and David Englander (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2008), pp.6-7.

of vagrancy. However, to extrapolate his findings to other regions, particularly the rural areas of the far north, would be inappropriate and could lead to historical misconstructions despite the similarity of class differentials referred to above. In his later writing he did make some effort to strike a difference between the deserving and the undeserving by saying:

I am anxious that the public should no longer confound the honest, independent working men with the beggars and pilferers of the country; and that they should see that the one class is respectable and worthy, as the other is degraded and vicious.⁷⁸

We are left guessing regarding the ratio between ‘the respectable and worthy’ and the ‘degraded and vicious’. Despite his reforming zeal and the mass of material he accumulated from his surveys, the fact that the ‘honest, independent working men (and women)’ were frequently stricken by poverty and disease is not apparent from the text. Furthermore, ‘beggars and pilferers’ were often working men (and women) driven to their condition of destitution, and subsequently sometimes into vagrancy, by short or long-term unemployment and ill health.

It is now evident that many migrant vagrants were on the road for structural reasons and were brought down by lack of food, lack of work, sickness or, in the case of women, abandonment by their husbands. As such they were driven to begging as one of several methods of survival. In 1850 vagrants on the road were as recognisable then as they had been for the past three hundred years: as a societal construct; unhealthy and weak through bad diet and begging; those who would be finally classified by a porter at the workhouse gate as a vagrant, if they had not already been by the police. The mountainous task of restoration to some form of independence after sinking into this condition was later acknowledged as a prime reason why the solution to the problem of vagrancy was as far away as ever.⁷⁹ No amount of labour, harsh treatment or poor food would help the old, sick and physically incapacitated vagrant.

Vagrants, wherever they had come from, were different things to different people. Their identity was reinforced by the ubiquitous assumption underlying nineteenth-century literature that immoral habits and behaviour patterns are communicable. Each group in society saw them in their own particular way albeit with some common denominators. The public saw the ‘distasteful disease’, the religious groups saw human immorality, the police and justices saw law breakers and the Board of Guardians and the government saw financial liability amongst the range of objections they had to the very existence of the vagrant. But perhaps most poignant

⁷⁸ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour, London Labour and the London Poor 1861-2, Vol I* (London, 1862, repr. 2008), p.371.

⁷⁹ 1909-10, *Thirty Ninth Annual Report of the Local Government Board*, p.65.

of all was the view that the vagrant had of him/herself as a cashless, powerless individual, separated and excluded by society, especially if they were Irish.

Chapter 4

The Irish Famine years

4 (i) The prelude to the famine

It is intriguing for historians to posit the question: how did the Irish migrants, who arrived in the far north during the Great Famine (1845-51), find support and employment on arrival in Britain considering the adverse circumstances they encountered? While Irish immigration to the far north during the Famine was substantially smaller than that experienced at the major ports of entry such as Liverpool and Glasgow, large numbers still arrived in the late 1840s. This harrowing episode had considerable short and long-term implications on towns in the region. This chapter focuses on the public and private support provided to Irish migrants in the region, specifically the provision of emergency relief and medical care. Such assistance, as we shall see, helped Irish migrants to survive as ‘incomers’ and strangers in an alien environment when disease, often attributed to the Irish, was widespread. There will also be particular attention to the use of the workhouse, a survival strategy considered to a last resort, on the routes established on the Whitehaven to Tynemouth journey. As in previous chapters there will be extensive use of census material, newspapers and government reports for analysis and data extraction.

While Irish communities had been established in many of Britain’s urban centres by the early nineteenth century, immigration from Ireland increased considerably after the Napoleonic Wars. From there on, as social deprivation and economic stagnation tightened its grip in Ireland and caused widespread poverty in certain regions, large numbers of the population embarked for Britain’s west coast ports. In the 1840s, the potato famine, with its disastrous human and ecological consequences, drove hundreds of thousands of Irish men, women and children to flee starvation for new lives abroad. For those driven to leave their homes by hunger and disease, the sea crossing between Belfast and Whitehaven as a deck passenger was a formidable undertaking in 1847:

For some weeks past the steamer which plies between this port [Whitehaven] and Belfast, has been in the habit of bringing over from two to three hundred passengers each trip, generally of the very lowest class of Irish including men, women and children. We suspect that very few of these ragged strangers sojourn for more than a few hours in Whitehaven after their arrival...very probably in

search of employment on railways and in the agricultural districts; so that upon the whole we do not know that the town has very much reason to complain of any burthen being imposed upon it by these importations from the sister country.¹

This article in a contemporary Cumberland newspaper was rare and no other articles were found referring to similar numbers, although other writers who expressed their views in 1847 did find 'reason to complain' in that black year in the history of the Irish famine. The figures of 'two to three hundred' should not, of course, be considered as a singular measurement of the problem although the actual numbers arriving each week in this period were probably around this number. Local advertisements included schedules for steam ships sailings from Whitehaven to Liverpool, Dublin and Belfast, which were making two journeys per week. Thus, it is likely that four to six hundred passengers per week were arriving at Whitehaven in this period.² There are no records available from the passenger services lines to corroborate the numbers who arrived in subsequent months, but the census records do provide some indication of the increase in those taking up residence in the town.³ The root cause of this population movement is still contested by historians but, according to R. D. Crotty, it was evident that after 1813, as a lack of capital led to increased cattle and sheep stocks and the acreage of tillage land, a major impediment to the enablement of agricultural adjustments in the economy was created.⁴ The buoyant economy enjoyed during the previous decades was now set to change as the effects of post war demand on man-power and resources gave way to unemployment and recession.⁵ The famine may have been hastened by these developments and the prevailing political dogmatism, but the path was established and the trend was in place.⁶

In their determined quest for shelter and employment in England, migrants had to deal with attitudes that were sometimes hostile and could have been influenced in part by reports, which were far from welcoming:

...when the Irish arrive; the lower kind of people get around, and they use no measured term of severity and taunt towards the captain for bringing such numbers over...[H]e has...the jeers and sneers of the people on shore...They say these people are coming to eat them up; that they are poor enough themselves, and they believe that they will be made poorer than they are through their coming.⁷

¹ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 18 May 1847.

² Mannix and Whellan, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cumberland* (Beverly, 1847), p.411.

³ *Census of England and Wales, enumerators books*, HO-2428-31, 1841-1851.

⁴ R. D. Crotty, *Irish agricultural production, its volume and structure* (Cork, 1966), pp. 44-45.

⁵ R. Floud and D. McCloskey, *The Economic History of Britain since 1700, vol. 1, 1700-1860* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 369-70.

⁶ R. D. Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production* (1966), p.64.

⁷ 1854 (396), *Report from the Select Committee on Poor Removal*, xviii, p.493.

Whatever their reason for being on the move, attitudes like these sharply contrasted with the Irish traditional acceptance of the traveller as part of everyday life, and an essential figure in Gaelic folk-culture, provided for by the active encouragement of alms-giving by the Catholic church. What these individuals or families were looking for was some basic support to ‘get on their feet’ after the desperate circumstances they had left behind. Similar sentiments had been expressed in *The Times* and picked up by a Carlisle newspaper in which Dr O’Higgins, Bishop of Armagh, had condemned the English for starving his countrymen, but he was rebuked by the editor who wrote, ‘we do not hesitate to say that in this instance the State has taken more care of the Irish than of English poverty’.⁸ Perhaps the fact that donations had been raised across the country as the famine worsened, and led to large sums of money being transferred to Ireland, justified the editor’s statement but the division of class, culture and nationality, proved greater than the bonds of shared religion. There was little evidence to suggest that the English Roman Catholics helped to assuage these attitudes towards their pauperised co-religionists.⁹ Towns like Whitehaven had their share of Irish business people, distinguished from the pauperised labouring class, well before the 1840s who were established in a range of trading professions, such as bacon and ham dealers, booksellers, china and glassware dealers, slaters and plasterers, all of whom advertised in the local press as ‘respectable’ members of society.¹⁰ It was newspaper reports in the Metropolis such as the *Morning Chronicle*, copied and redistributed in towns such as Liverpool, the principal port for migrant landings, and Merthyr Tydfil an iron-manufacturing town in south Wales, that would fuel the fears of a potential disaster waiting to happen in places like Whitehaven and Carlisle. Paul O’Leary argued that social commentary was much more susceptible to being read in different ways [outside of the metropolis] depending on the local context in which was received.¹¹ Any measurement of the effects of this type of information is however difficult to establish. For those who found themselves on the west coast of Cumberland the alternatives were limited when the Irish poor (or the ‘low Irish’, as they were habitually described), came to represent the entire migrant community.¹²

⁸ *Carlisle Patriot*, 25 June 1847.

⁹ E. H. Hunt, *British Labour History, 1815-1914* (London, 1981), p.162.

¹⁰ Parson and White, *Directory of Cumberland and Westmorland* (Leeds, 1829).

¹¹ Paul O’Leary, ‘Mass commodity culture and identity: the *Morning Chronicle* and Irish migrants in a nineteenth-century Welsh industrial town’, *Urban History*, 35, 2 (London, 2008), p. 238.

¹² O’Leary, ‘Mass commodity culture...’ (London, 2008), p. 240.

4 (ii) *The rising tide of migrants*

The west-east routes via Stainmore to Middlesbrough, and Hexham to Newcastle, were well-established carriage routes for commercial and passenger purposes. Furthermore, the new railway connecting Carlisle to Newcastle was opened in 1839, followed by the route connecting Newcastle and Berwick-upon-Tweed in 1847. Both these lines would have been available for passengers when the influx of migrants accelerated in the late 1840s. As an alternative to being on foot or in an open carriage, this was the favoured option for the few who could afford the fare. In addition to the attraction of potential employment there was a more subtle inducement to move on to the east of the region. This came in the form of:

Of the many asylums to which the Irish fled after the great exodus of the forties, there was none owing to many circumstances that they were ultimately to find more favourable surroundings than the Tyneside.¹³

Here in Tyneside the Irish 'were accorded no blame for 'Irish fever' or for the epidemic', and would have been aware of this societal ambience from kith and kin who offered support to newcomers from the west of the region.¹⁴ The long cart ride or tramp of 110 miles from Whitehaven must have been worth enduring for some, if only to escape accusations of blame for the ills of the host population. However, the housing conditions that awaited them at the end of their journey would prove to be similar to those they had left behind in west Cumberland with no escape from the poverty they had experienced, thus, as a report in the *Newcastle Journal* observed in March 1847, 'large numbers of Irish found there was little or no work for them and large-scale claims for relief were to be expected'.¹⁵ Franca Puddu's thesis therefore is not an entirely accurate assessment of the reception they received.

Many had come from Morpeth, where Irish migrants regularly made over-night stops en route to Scotland and Scots migrants stopped on their journey south. Guardians here reported a 100 per cent increase in vagrancy in the three months after April 1847.¹⁶ An estimated 9,000 Irish vagrants were thought to be on the move throughout the country many of whom were Famine refugees who sought shelter in the casual wards of the workhouses. Whitehaven may have had a difficult time coping with the numbers who arrived there but in Liverpool the Irish numbered tens of thousands rather than hundreds. Despite Liverpool being 125 miles south of

¹³ P. Lavery (ed), *Irish heroes in the great War* (London, 1917), p.21; Franca Puddu, 'The Irish on Tyneside', Migration and Identity, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, 1997, p.105-6

¹⁴ Franca Puddu, 'The Irish on Tyneside' p.106; R. J. Cooter, 'The Irish in County Durham and Newcastle, 1840-1880, MA thesis (1973), p.60.

¹⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 27 March 1847.

¹⁶ Frank Neal, 'The Famine Irish in England and Wales' in P. Sullivan, *The Meaning of Famine* (2000), p.56

Carlisle, what happened there was used by the press as a barometer from which to gauge the social climate and inform their readers in the far north. Numbers there were simply overwhelming for the authorities, and the workhouses were soon filled to capacity. The estimated number of Irish arriving in Liverpool in 1847 was 296,213, of whom 39 per cent were supposed to be paupers.¹⁷ This was the peak year, although numbers remained at a similar level until the early 1850s. The authorities in Liverpool were simply unable, at least initially, to cope with such numbers, averaging as they did almost 3,000 additional ‘paupers’ every week throughout the year.¹⁸ Some 13,471 paupers claimed relief in Liverpool during the week ended 19 December 1846, compared to 888 during the same week of the previous year. There were, understandably enough, cries of alarm in the Liverpool press:

The numbers of starving Irish, men and children daily landing on our quays is appalling, and the parish of Liverpool has at present the painful and most costly task to encounter, of keeping them alive if possible.¹⁹

Other ports, too, were overwhelmed in 1847. In places such as Newport and Cardiff refuges for the destitute run by charitable institutions, were established to support the destitute masses. The superintendent of police commented ‘at first there were 13 or 14 in a vessel then increasing to 200 in one vessel...many of them starving ...many in an advanced state of disease. Many died shortly after landing’.²⁰ All this prompted the regional newspapers to report on the state of affairs throughout the country and the far north was no exception. In 1847, one Carlisle newspaper reported a potential catastrophe waiting to happen now that the workhouses in Ireland had filled to capacity:

There is no means of checking this heartless cruelty, for out-door relief is not permitted in Ireland and all the workhouses are crowded to overflowing. It is clear that this evil cannot be allowed to proceed without the most ruinous consequences. The 13,000 now in this town will soon be increased to 20,000 or even 30,000 and the parish rates will rise from 2s to 5s or even 10s in the pound.²¹

There was a sense in this article that these costs were inevitable but there was also a feeling of outrage that they would have to be borne by the town’s ratepayers when they should be the responsibility of government and the exchequer. In Liverpool, where all eyes were on the famine victims who streamed onto the quayside, the newspapers of both Liberal and Tory persuasion

¹⁷ Frank Neal, *Black 47* (London, 1998), pp. 55, 61.

¹⁸ Neal, *Black 47* (1998), p.126.

¹⁹ *Liverpool Mercury*, 15 January 1847.

²⁰ 1847-8, *Reports of Commissioners on Vagrancy*, p.31.

²¹ *Carlisle Patriot*, 1 January 1847.

carried their own stories on the same theme under the banner of ‘Pauperism Invasion’, and ‘Exaggeration of the poor rates’,²² whilst the Newcastle Union reported a doubling of poor relief expenditure in the last financial quarter.²³ Newspaper editors across the country were in accord that something had to be done to stop the escalating drain on local rates. What effect these articles had on the public, or the Guardians in the different Unions, in shaping their attitudes is hard to say, but the question remains: was the article justified in its attempt to raise the prospect of potential catastrophe in its portrayal of the problem? In 1846 there were 2,194 in-door and outdoor paupers with rights to relief in Carlisle who were being maintained at a cost of £1,532 by the rate-payers in a total population of around 27,500.²⁴ By 1847 costs continued to rise in a population that had hardly changed and the size of the problem facing the authorities was now on a different scale if the article was to be taken seriously.²⁵

As the situation became more serious, questions were being asked in the House of Commons about the unpredictable nature of the famine and its consequences for the population. Migrants were not on the agenda when Sir B. Hall produced figures for the Home Secretary, that 150,750 immigrants had arrived in the first half of the year and of those only 48,186 (32%) had emigrated to America and Canada, the rest were wandering about Liverpool.²⁶ Further north the workhouses in Carlisle provided accommodation for just 127 men, 150 women, and 130 children, a small fraction of the Liverpool numbers, but Irish migrants continued to land on the Whitehaven quayside. The prospect of such proportional problems must have been a serious worry for the authorities.

As the famine dragged on the shipping companies were quick to see the trade in passenger traffic and companies such as the *Whitehaven Steam Navigation Company* picked up increasing numbers of migrants on their Belfast to Whitehaven route. Local advertising based on three sailings per week offered those who could afford it, the passage to Whitehaven and the option of travelling north to Maryport and Carlisle using the newly constructed railway connections. Some newspaper reporters saw this route as no more than a means of access to the poor relief, which was ‘owned’ by the English poor. Others offered a hint of empathy for the migrants’ wretchedness:

We have often witnessed importations of wretched looking human beings into this port from Ireland but the party brought here on Wednesday last from by one of our steamers from Belfast far exceeded any importation of settlers we have ever before

²² *Liverpool Courier*, 27 January 1847.

²³ *Newcastle Journal*, 1 May 1847.

²⁴ Mannix and Whellan, *History and Directory of Cumberland* (Beverley, 1847), p.137.

²⁵ An extensive search for the precise costs of the poor in Carlisle during 1847 yielded no results.

²⁶ Hansard Parliamentary Debates, ‘*Immigration of Irish Paupers*’, 7 May 1847, Vol. XCII.

seen...carrying large packages upon their backs, none of them we believe had either a stocking or shoe upon their feet or a hat upon their heads and in other respects their dresses were wretched in the extreme and barely sufficient to hide their nakedness.²⁷

John Jenkins, magistrate in the County of Cumberland, gave evidence to a Police Committee and suggested that ‘vast numbers of Irish vagrants were passed under magisterial and police inspection, upwards of 12,000, in the last year’, an astonishing figure, which was disputed by J. Clarke, Inspector of Police and Inspector of Vagrants, who claimed, perhaps more realistically, that only 617 persons applied for vagrant tickets in the same period’.²⁸ This discrepancy is too large to ignore. It was either a gross exaggeration or that all migrants were classified as vagrants with or without a ticket. A formal request for a ticket by a purposeful visit to the police station would have been considered by very few paupers as most would have been aware of their possible removal back to Ireland if they had needed to stay for more than a night in the workhouse. This would have been especially relevant for migrants travelling as a family with children. Some no doubt would have been forced to enter the workhouse due to sickness or exhaustion, which the law allowed without threat of removal. However, many arrived and drifted into the poorest areas of the towns and, on the whole, were left to themselves to rely on some private charity or kith and kin.²⁹

4 (iii) *Sources of relief and forms of support*

There were three main sources of relief for the destitute migrants: the workhouse, private charities and the church. In addition, Friendly Societies are referred to throughout the extant literature as providers of a cheap form of insurance against accident, death and ill health. The Famine Irish, however, could not expect support from friendly societies. The poorest people simply could not afford the monthly dues required for membership. With hardly sufficient money to make ends meet there was nothing left over for insurance, desirable though it may have been. Any initiative to safeguard the labour force by business men such as J. C. Curwen, land and mine owner in west Cumberland, was designed to serve trades people such as builders, bricklayers and joiners.³⁰ Conditions attached to membership of his scheme excluded ‘those who were likely to become a heavy charge,

²⁷ *Cumberland Pacquet and Ware's Whitehaven Advertiser*, 4 December 1849, p.2.

²⁸ *Carlisle Journal*, 28 Nov 1851.

²⁹ *Carlisle Journal*, 31 May 1850.

³⁰ C. M. L. Bouch and G. P. Jones, *A short economic and social history of the Lakes counties, 1500-1830* (Manchester 1961), p.311.

and included ‘only sound and healthy men between 18 and 40 years of age’. It ‘barred miners and slate quarry workers, labourers and all those whose trades were particularly prejudicial to health, such as ‘dead-white’ painters, bailiff’s followers, soldiers and sailors. These trades would, by definition, have included a large proportion of poor Irish migrants who could not afford to pay the premiums.

North of the border, the Free Church of Scotland was the first to mount a major relief operation as the potato harvest failed there in the autumn of 1846. They later combined with the Glasgow and Edinburgh relief agencies to form The Central Board of Management for Highland Relief.³¹ However, the Highland potato failures were not the cause of widespread mortality chiefly because measures were undertaken promptly, and because most distressed areas were accessible by sea, which made distribution of relief grain relatively easy.³² Key to this relief operation was the revolution in transport in the form of steam ships operating regular services between the islands and along the western coastal villages³³ which, together with the Royal Navy, played an important role in assisting with the government’s relief effort.³⁴ These contained the crisis and meant that the disposed and destitute were managed more efficiently than those south of the border and the forced movement of the population had considerably less of an impact in the far north of England than it might have had.

In addition to the Victorian conscience of the church-going communities who were busy providing what they could in cash and kind for the poor in Whitehaven, there were several charities organised to fill the poverty gap. For example: The Ladies Benevolent Society (1818), for the relieve of the sick and poor; the Blanket and Clothing Society (1817), supplying poor with cheap clothing, and Matthew Pipers Soup Kitchen, which was reported in the local press in the 1840s as the generous work of the donors in the town. The Female Visiting Society (1803) ‘searched out the wretched’ with help³⁵ and the Infant Clothing Society (1811) provided linen, and bedding for poor married women through legacies and benefactors via churchwardens at Trinity Church.³⁶ Press reports

³¹ T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.114.

³² Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Destitution and migration: labour, mobility and relief from famine in Highland Scotland 1836-1850’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 14, 2 (1988), p.1.

³³ C. L. D. Duckworth and G. E. Langmuir, *West Highland Steamers* (Glasgow, 1967).

³⁴ T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, p.114.

³⁵ W. Parson and W. White, *History, Directory and Gazetteer of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmorland with that part of the Lake District in Lancashire* (Leeds, 1829), pp. 255, 269.

³⁶ C. M. L. Bouch and G. P. Jones, *The Lake Counties, 1500-1830* (Manchester, 1961); Whitehaven Herald, 23 & 30 January 1847.

concerning charity work, without exception in the survey carried out, always focussed on the names of donors and the amounts donated rather the condition of the recipients, or the reasons for the problems they faced. It appeared that Whitehaven was well equipped to deal with the numbers that landed on the quay-side from Ireland but frustratingly few records of these activities have survived. However, reference to the record offices of larger towns such as Liverpool and Newcastle provided some data for unit comparisons. In Liverpool, by the beginning of 1847, soup kitchens had been set up to cater for a mass feeding programme. On 23 January alone 22,574 Irish received soup tickets on that day.³⁷ Despite fraudulent claims for extra children by the recipients of the tickets, the authorities managed to organise the system with some effect.³⁸ Similarly in Newcastle, the records of *The General Soup Kitchen*, although they were dated some years later than the famine period, provided a means to assess the cost and volume of goods dispensed to the poor. A total of 2,300 gallons of soup at a cost of £39.5s.5d was ladled out to the 'labouring class in a single week.'³⁹ On the basis that each recipient was given two quarts of soup per day, this volume of soup would have served 9,200 persons at a cost of four pence per person, compared to a night in the Tynemouth workhouse in the casual ward which was costed at three pence per person.⁴⁰ These costs were further reduced later in the same month when 16,450 gallons (65,800 quarts) served 32,900 persons at a cost of £278.5s.5d, one half of the earlier costs of two pence per person.⁴¹ These figures illustrate just how many persons were in need of assistance in the town and although there was no reference to migrants as specific recipients of the charity it is almost certain that they were in receipt of such charity. A night in the workhouse and the possible provision of a meal must also have been taken up by many migrants but the possibility of consequent removal once on the register of the authorities would have served as some deterrent.

Anglicans, Methodists and other denominations, all played their part in appeals from the pulpit calling for donations for the relief of the destitute Irish but the Quakers played their part without the religious zeal which was characteristic of other denominations.⁴² The scale of the Wesleyan and Methodist contribution to the charitable

³⁷ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 9 Feb 1841, 20 Jan 1852.

³⁸ 1854 (396), *Select Committee on Poor Removal*, XVII, App. 8, p.593.

³⁹ TWRO, DX 1151/121, *General Soup Kitchen Minute Book*, 1862-68.

⁴⁰ TWRO, PUTY/2/30, *Vagrant Book*, 1842.

⁴¹ TWRO, DX 1151/121, *General Soup Kitchen Minute Book*, 1862-68.

⁴² A. Somerville, *Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847* (Dublin, 1994), pp.50, 64; R. Watson, 'Poverty in north-east Lancashire', *Local Population Studies*, 55 (1995), pp. 22-24.

work was unprecedented and it turned out to be an important influence in helping to assuage the xenophobic outlooks.⁴³ A rather different priority was on the agenda of the evangelical, charitable and socially concerned members of the middle class. Their strategy was to extract as many individuals from the mass of the lowest class in the lodging houses, which had the advantage of taking them ‘off the pay roll’ of the local authorities.⁴⁴ Cash collections were significant and during one week in February 1847, £91.8s.2d was collected from west Cumberland churches.⁴⁵ But there was strong opposition to paying for what many believed was money for others, when the English poor were considered more deserving of such benefits. *The Times* received 62 letters in one post from clergymen who objected to collecting for famine relief:

Why should the United Kingdom pay for the extravagance of Ireland? An Anglican minister says that giving any more money to Ireland would be ‘about as ineffectual as to throw a sack full of gold into one of their plentiful bogs’. *The Times* is against ‘begging for Ireland’ and suggests that sending any more money raised by the queen’s letter should be given to the English poor.⁴⁶

The spirit of generosity to the poor was, on this occasion, only to be extended to the English poor. These appeals however were concerned with those impoverished by the famine in Ireland rather than the Irish on the English door step and emphasised the perennial concern that money sent to Ireland was more of a priority than the provision of relief in Britain. Charitable endeavours however were apt to flounder on the objection that any easing of pressure upon the poor would merely encourage greater immigration and allow them more facility to circumvent the system to their advantage.⁴⁷ Yet, large numbers of destitute, often disease-ridden Irish had entered Britain by this time, and they could not be ignored. This was particularly true when a malignant strain of epidemic typhus erupted in early 1847, which became known as ‘Irish fever’.

4 (iv) *Problems of health and disease*

For the local inhabitants at the ports of arrival was the prospect of contamination by a disease, particularly epidemic typhus or ‘Irish fever’ was a general concern. It was the

⁴³ K. D. M. Snell, and P. S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.154-9.

⁴⁴ R. D. Cassell, *Medical charities, medical politics: The Irish dispensary system and the Poor Law, 1834-1872* (Wooldridge, 1997), p.130.

⁴⁵ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 4 February 1847 [Egremont: £7.18s.9d; Brigham: £9; Irton: £13.0s.3d; Keswick: £16.5s.7d; Cockermouth: £45.3s.7d].

⁴⁶ Brendon O’Cathaoir, *Famine Diary* (Dublin, 1999), p.142.

⁴⁷ A. Redford, *Labour migration in England*, pp.165-6.

overwhelming opinion in Britain at the time, that fever was an Irish import.⁴⁸ Evidence to support this can be found in the Registrar General's Reports, which gave specific attention to the main ports of arrival such as Liverpool:

a considerable portion of the increase [of deaths] arises from the great influx of poor people from Ireland, most of whom are quite destitute when they arrive. Some have been only a few weeks, others a few days in the town previous to their death.⁴⁹

This was reported in the newspapers as reason for the spread of disease as 'the majority of the infected were Irish'⁵⁰, but the Registrar made an attempt to allay the fears of the public when he said:

...the extraordinary mortality cannot be ascribed, to any great extent, to the influx of Irish: in Manchester. This influx is stated to have taken place during the last two or three months of 1846 before the tide of Irish destitution had set on Lancashire.⁵¹

Above all, migrants were shunned during this critical period in their history, because the fear of disease cast its long shadow over them. Previous chapters have analysed the movement and settlement of the Irish in the region before 1845 but nothing prepared the Poor Law Unions for what started as a trickle in the early part of the century and turned into a flood by the late 1840s. Whole families, made their way to the nearest Irish port in a bid to find their way to Britain. Many of the immigrants who set foot on the shores of west Cumberland were ill with Typhus and malnutrition and suffered the after effects of a sea crossing inadequately clothed or fed. Most would make their way to the workhouse hoping for assistance where the work master would need to authenticate their claims for relief and determine who was genuinely sick. His impromptu diagnosis would no doubt pick out some of those seriously ill with Typhus who could be separated for fever hospital (shed) accommodation, but contamination of other inmates was a serious problem for him.

It was in a letter from James L Barker, Clerk to the Guardians of the Tynemouth Poor Law Union, to the Poor Law Board that the 'emergency' became clearer:

...three of the cases [cholera] reported last week have died. Two new cases occurred yesterday, one dying in 13 hours, and the other not expected to live. It broke out among the Irish in Cowpen Quay, and it is expected to cause havoc.⁵²

⁴⁸ Neal, *Black* 47 (1998), p.139.

⁴⁹ 1849 (1087) *Ninth Annual Report of the registrar General*, pp. xxvi-xxviii.

⁵⁰ *Liverpool Journal*, 6 February 1847.

⁵¹ 1849 (1087), *Ninth Annual report of the Registrar General*, p. xxix,

⁵² James L. Barker, Clerk to the Guardians of the Tynemouth Poor Law Union to the Poor Law Board (forwarding a copy of the letter received from Gilbert Ward, Medical Officer, Blyth, November 1848).

The reference to the ‘Irish in Cowpen Quay’ and the expected ‘havoc’, led to the fear that a disaster loomed on the scale that Liverpool had experienced in the year when the mortality rate in Liverpool soared to 36 per 1000 of the population compared to the national average of 22 per 1000.⁵³ This promoted the need for isolation facilities for the patients, but fever sheds had gained a reputation as death traps where people were cut off from friends and family. Their location was extremely problematic for the authorities due to the public fear of infection of the locality. This fear was also shared by the migrants, who were housed in fever sheds created specifically for their isolation. The avoidance strategy for some was to hide their fever and so evade possible eviction from their dwellings during the fumigation process, a procedure carried out by the authorities by burning sulphur candles and lime washing walls whenever a fever case was reported. If the news got about that there was fever in the home there was the real possibility that the breadwinners would lose their jobs simply because the rest of the work force would refuse to work with those suspected of living in a fever-ridden dwelling.⁵⁴ For many Irish in the town, where the authorities were at their wits end in the search for a way to handle the crisis, the fever shed was the only option. Perhaps the most alarming prospect for parents was the fear of an early death for their children, especially in the disease-ridden environment inhabited by the poorest of the poor, which led to the critical concern that all needed to be baptised if they were to avoid the fearful prospect of life after death in limbo. This was as real for the Catholic Irish as the reality of life in the flesh. Baptism of infants in the nineteenth-century was not just desirable by the parents, it was a cultural necessity for both Catholics, Protestants and non-practicing Christians across all social classes. Children of these families provided insights into the overall picture of settlement and movement of migrants into and beyond Whitehaven. Of great interest for this study were the baptismal records of the Catholic chapel built in 1761 in the heart of Whitehaven’s western housing area, and the baptisms recorded in the Catholic Church in Penrith thirty miles north.⁵⁵ These provide a strong indicator of the perceived need for the rite of baptism in the lives of the population. Between the years 1845 and 1851, there were an average of 182 Catholic baptisms per year in Whitehaven, reaching a maximum of 216 in 1850-1. The number climbed steadily through 1847, a critical year in Irish famine history, to record a small drop in 1849 after which it rose again to a plateau in the census year of 1851, a little over an average of four per week. An indication of the Irish parentage of these infants was obtained by examining the surnames, bearing in mind the unreliability of testing for ‘Irish’

⁵³ E. M. Crawford, *The hungry stream: essays on emigration and famine* (1997), p.143.

⁵⁴ F. B. Smith, *People’s Health 1830-1910* (London, 1979), pp.242-3.

⁵⁵ St Begh’s Catholic Church Archives, Whitehaven, *Baptismal Register, 1841-1857*.

names which can be similar to Scots and English. Malcom Smith and Donald MacRaild point to the origin of Irish in the area as being most frequently from Mayo and Sligo in the west of Ireland, and Ulster in the east, many of whom would have dis-embarked in west Cumberland ports.⁵⁶ In 1851 there were 104 identifiable names (48% of the total registered) which could be confidently assigned to Irish heritage.⁵⁷ Nine names (4%) were Scots, and the remaining 103 (48%) were English. It was not possible to determine whether the English Catholics were born in England or Ireland when referring to the church records, as the Ulster counties were home to many Irish with English and Scots surnames who made the journey to England to escape the famine. Two other groups would also have added to the total of Irish in the town: those Irish-born residents firmly in place prior to the ‘famine wave’ of immigrants; and those who were removed from other parishes and conveyed to this port of embarkation on their route back to their parish of settlement in Ireland as outlined in the removal process in Chapter 2. A few of these would have required baptismal services for their new born children. From the graph showing the number of baptisms in Whitehaven the most important feature to note is the cumulative total of those children identified as of Irish parentage which amounted to 635 (48% of the total number of baptisms recorded), a far larger number than those Catholic children under six years old who lived in Whitehaven at the time. The question arises from this disparity, ‘where did they all go’? As discussed earlier in the study many migrants tramped inland to places like Cleator Moor, Egremont and the surrounding villages where they hoped to find employment in the iron mines. Even in Cleator Moor, which was the largest settlement village and the one that offered the greatest chance of employment for those moving inland, there were only 516 Irish-born inhabitants in 1851.

⁵⁶ Malcom Smith and D. M. MacRaild, ‘The origins of the Irish in Northern England: An Isonomic Analysis of Data from the 1881 Census’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 27, 2/3 (2009), pp.152-177.

⁵⁷ <http://surnames.behindthename.com/names/usage/irish>, accessed, 14 March 2017.

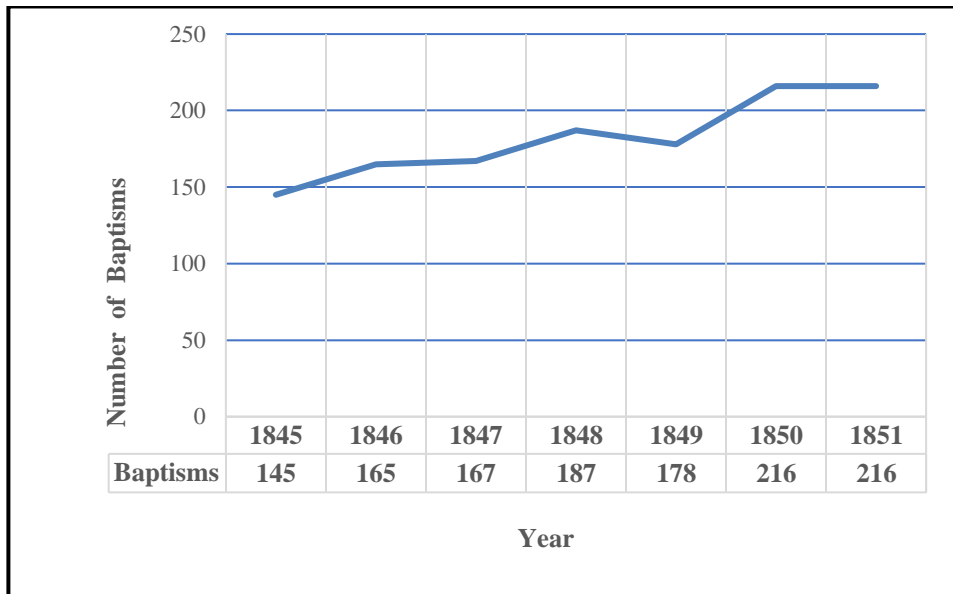


Figure 4.1: Number of Baptisms, St Begh's Catholic Church, Whitehaven, 1845-1851⁵⁸.

This accounted for a possible 60 children (using the 11% sample percentage of children recorded in Whitehaven), but does not allow for those children who would have been of protestant parentage. Some would have made their way northwards or eastwards with high hopes of employment where increasing numbers of Irish were settling in Tynemouth, Newcastle, and Middlesbrough, towns where ship building and the coal mining industry were rapidly expanding. To a lesser extent towns like Penrith offered some escape from the crowded conditions in the port. Baptisms there were considerably less in number but do indicate an Irish presence, which was recorded by the Catholic church as around eleven baptisms per year, as just six per cent of the Whitehaven numbers.⁵⁹ The mortality rate in Penrith in the year of the cholera epidemic in 1849, when it would indeed be expected to be higher than the previous years of the decade, was 26 per 1000 in 1849.⁶⁰ This was higher than the national average of 22 per 1000 in 1848, but below the rate recorded in Whitehaven where it was known to range between 28.13 per 1000 and 32.75 per 1000. It was possible that this was one of the factors that encouraged those who were able to make their way north to Penrith to find living space and work opportunities. Labouring work for Irish as Navvies on the new railway line construction was recorded by Terry Coleman as an attractive form of employment in 1844-1847 in the early

⁵⁸ St Begh's Catholic Church Archives, Whitehaven, *Baptismal Register, 1841-1857*.

⁵⁹ St Catherine's Catholic Church Archives, Penrith, *Baptismal Register, 1845-1854*.

⁶⁰ J. Rawlinson, *A Report of the General Board of Health*, p.9; *Carlisle Patriot*, 24 November 1849.

years of the Famine.⁶¹ Many of these men were accommodated in makeshift shelters in camps around the town and lived in the meanest circumstances, prone to disease and sometimes tragic consequences. However, their propensity to keep the authorities at arm's length for fear of removal could have gruesome consequences. Baptismal records from St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Penrith provided one example of a priest who was called to baptise three sick children who, within twenty-four hours, all died. Whether this was ultimately due to the parent's reticence in calling for medical care is impossible to say.⁶² The fear of infant mortality was a particular horror well known by the Irish congregants of St Catherine's, as the parish priest George Leo Haydock recorded, for example: the baptisms of James Doyle in November 1846, 'his twin brother dying...'; in May 1847 Elizabeth Routledge (mother Née Murphy) 'lived a fortnight'; and the prematurely born John Mullane, infant son of the 'Irish Labourer' John Mullane and baptised 'in *artic mortis*, d[ied] next day, and mother soon after'.⁶³ Medical care was not the only service in short supply for the migrant poor: shelter, food and clothing were all major personal priorities in the sometimes desperate search for strategies to make ends meet.

4 (v) *Survival and support strategies*

The press, and the public's craving for the ubiquitous scapegoat upon which to pin their fears, stoked the furnace of antipathy towards the Irish who were claimed to be 'by nature and habit, dirty, proud lazy beggars'.⁶⁴ Begging was certainly a principal survival strategy available to most newly arrived migrants in order to keep what little money they had in reserve for basic accommodation until they found work. Even a sum of two pounds could enable a family to survive for a few weeks in the interim period. In Liverpool, where tens of thousands of migrants flowed into the city, the 'Irish migrant' phenomenon had escalated to such proportions that the press were particularly virulent in their attempts to separate them from the rest of the inhabitants:

It is remarkable that the lower order of Irish papists are the filthiest beings in the habitable globe, they abound in dirt and vermin and have no care for anything but self-gratification that they would degrade the brute creation.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Terry Coleman, *The Railway Navvies, A history of the men who made the railways* (London, 1965).

⁶² St Catherine's Catholic Church Archives, Penrith, *Baptismal Register*, 14 September 1846.

⁶³ St Catherine's Catholic Church Archives, Penrith, *Baptismal Register*, September 1846, 19 November 1846, 23 May 1847, in chapter by Michael Mullett, 'Composed entirely of the poorest class: The establishment of the Parish of St Catherine, Penrith, Cumbria, 1833-1850' in John Davies and Allan Mitchinson, *Obstinate Souls* (Ormskirk, 2011), pp.29-47.

⁶⁴ *Whitehaven Herald*, 5 December 1846.

⁶⁵ O'Cathaoir, *Famine Diary* (Dublin, 1999), p.139.

Such comments marginalised the many migrant workers as yet without roots in the town and with no ‘belonging’ or legal settlement. It was William Duncan, Liverpool’s Medical Officer of Health, who referred to the ‘moral contamination’ of the lowest orders by the Irish and that fever affected ‘almost exclusively the Irish who represented 88 per cent of all the patients in the fever hospital.’⁶⁶ It was these enduring comments that provided the vital ingredient in the recipe of treatment that the Irish received at the hands of the public, the press and the authorities as the effects of the famine took their toll.

Those in need of food and assistance were inevitably those suffering from malnutrition and their consequent vulnerability to disease. There was no legal requirement for medical relief to be provided for paupers before 1834 but the dispensary and the infirmary, as subscription funded bodies, ensured this was available for those in need, just as the workhouse medical facilities did after this date. Private charity initiatives in the region were a life line for the poor and to some degree mitigated the stigma associated with the ‘last resort’ option of the workhouse. The dispensaries were widespread and established in virtually every town in the country.⁶⁷ One opened in Carlisle in 1782, followed by Cockermouth and Whitehaven in 1785. Others opened in Newcastle in 1790 and Workington in 1830, which were supported by philanthropic benefactors and began to operate a free admission service for casual patients. Medics gave their time gratuitously and medical officers were routinely appointed by Boards of Guardians.⁶⁸ They were undoubtedly welcomed by the English poor, but there was an element of reticence by migrants to call for their help which would have had similar implications to that of claiming poor relief and its associated threat of potential removal. However, it was a requirement of the General Board of Health that those who contracted an infectious disease must contact the Poor Law Union. The labouring class, particularly the itinerant Irish, would have been less than enthusiastic about this, even though the medical officers were more concerned with health issues rather than settlement issues, and had no requirement to report those individuals who lacked legal settlement.⁶⁹ The records of the Carlisle Dispensary provide interesting data from 1810 in which a statement of intent set out the nature of their purpose and goals and emphasised the obligations of the more affluent classes to the poor ‘whether of

⁶⁶ *Liverpool Journal*, 6 March 1847.

⁶⁷ R. G. Hodgkinson, *The origins of the National Health Service: The medical services of the new Poor Law, 1834-71* (London, 1967), pp.185-214.

⁶⁸ Mannix and Whellan, *History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Cumberland* (Beverley, 1847).

⁶⁹ M. F. Flinn, ‘Medical services under the new poor law’, in Derek Fraser (ed.), *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (London, 1976), pp.48-9.

benevolence or religion'.⁷⁰ The benefits accrued by the city were marked by 'the restoration of great numbers to health and the capacity of supporting themselves'.⁷¹

The 'dispensary system' was not straight forward for migrants. Its aim was 'to provide free advice and medicine, without expense or danger to every poor man',⁷² but for the Irish and Scots migrants there were serious obstacles in their pursuit of medical attention. First, patients were required to obtain a letter of recommendation to the Dispensary, prior to attendance, which was signed by a 'subscriber', a list of whom was appended to the front of the plan. Subscribers were those who financially supported the Dispensary and were distributed around the town in their more affluent dwellings and businesses. To make contact with these individuals would have been extremely difficult for the migrants, or their relatives, in their pursuit of medical help. What the opulent classes were aware of however was the need to maintain some immunity from disease by the efficient and prompt treatment of the poor among whom epidemic fevers chiefly prevailed. Second, any suspicion of fever was likely to have consequences for them outlined earlier in this chapter. According to the report writer in 1843 'the prospects for the health of the town were good', but a survey of the report's statistical tables from 1846 to 1859 indicated that these prospects did not materialise.

Considering the large proportion of Irish employed in the growing industrial base of Carlisle, particularly the textile trades (discussed in chapter 6), the conspicuous absence of any reference to the migrant poor in the dispensary's annual reports was surprising.⁷³ This was either an honourable adherence to the Hippocratic oath to 'prevent disease whenever I can',⁷⁴ without reference to religion or birth, or the numbers of migrants treated was too insignificant to warrant attention, which seems likely when considering the 'signed letter' requirement. Quarantining of all who were sick was absolutely what the authority needed to do. There were much worse risks in having typhus-ridden folk wandering the town spreading infection.

⁷⁰ CRO, *A Plan of the Carlisle Dispensary with list of Subscribers, 1847*, Jackson Collection, Public library, Carlisle [Appendix].

⁷¹ CRO, *A Plan of the Carlisle Dispensary*, p.1[Appendix].

⁷² CRO, *A Plan of the Carlisle Dispensary*, p.1[Appendix].

⁷³ Census England and Wales, 1841, HO-2340 [records one third of Carlisle's labour force of 9,162 as textile workers]

⁷⁴ Vivian Nutton, *Review of Loeb* (1988), vols. 5-6.

	Cumberland		Northumberland	
Year/Quarter	1848	1850	1848	1850
March	1310	939	2134	1454
June	1012	1066	1645	1501
September	777	844	1310	1405
December	883	845	1335	1402
Totals	3982	3694	6425	5762

Table 4.1 All deaths in England and Wales at the end of each quarter, 1848, 1850.⁷⁵

Date	Digestion (Cholera)	Continued fever (Typhus)	Diarrehoea (Typhoid)	Total in these categories	Total Admitted
1846	0	74	165	239	2,403
1847	2	84	91	177	1,736
1848	6	43	47	96	974
1849	17	25	147	189	1,839
1850	0	12	91	103	1,415
1851	16	45	85	146	2,018
1852	0	94	101	195	2,381
1853	11	71	171	253	2,111
1854	3	71	152	226	2,044
1855	0	132	119	251	3,165
1856	0	96	127	223	3,268
1857	0	15	123	138	3,788
1859	0	94	210	304	2,580

Table 4.2: Diseases recorded in Carlisle Dispensary, 1846-1859.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Eleventh Annual Report of the Registrar-General, 1850*, pp.12-13; *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Registrar-General, 1852*, pp.10-11.

⁷⁶ CRO, *A Plan of the Carlisle Dispensary*, Table of causes of illness and numbers affected.

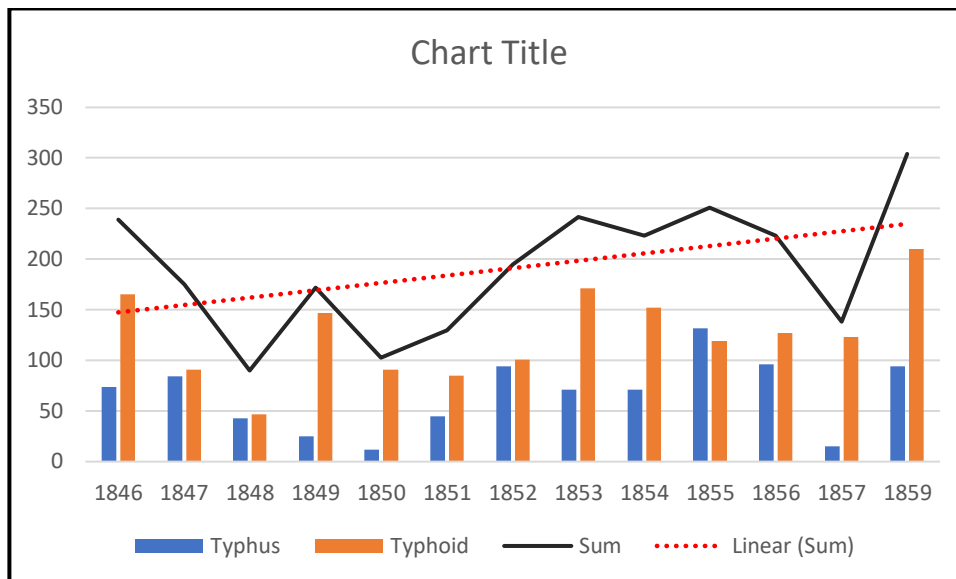


Figure 4.2: Incidence of fever cases in Carlisle Dispensary, 1846-59⁷⁷

Table 4.2 was compiled from the annual statements of the Carlisle dispensary which provided some evidence that quarantining the sick was precisely what the authorities wanted to do, by isolation and control, to prevent the potential for the disease to spread. Nationality or birth-place were not recorded, only medical data and numbers treated. Whether the patients were Irish, Scots or other, appeared to be of no consequence. which ignored Duncan's view that fever affected almost exclusively the Irish. When all cases registered were plotted (Figure 4.1) for 'continuing fever' and 'typhoid' (typically registered as diarrhoea), the trend line indicated a positive gradient for the relatively erratic figures recorded. There were significant numbers of fever cases which oscillated between successively higher peaks, and undoubtedly warranted the Guardians' attention. By 1850 total numbers of Typhus cases (including Typhoid) in England had dropped to 45.6% of the 1847 level, in the northern counties by 38.8% and in the city of Carlisle to 58.2%. Of these the percentage of Irish cases was less than ten per cent and as low as three per cent in 1850 in the northern counties. ⁷⁸

As the surge of Irish migration continued during the critical years of 1845-1849 the attention of the authorities became more and more focussed on cause and effect. Cause was not always accorded the accuracy it warranted in the contemporary press and, of the many examples printed, it was a report in a Lancashire newspaper some years earlier that first arrested the attention of the public in 1831:

⁷⁷ CRO, *Carlisle Dispensary Reports, Statistical tables, 1845-1859*.

⁷⁸ *Tenth and Annual Report of the Registrar General 1849*, pp.56-7.

A man called Mallan, a rambling Irish cobbler, had attended his father in Sunderland, who died of cholera, had assisted in laying out the body, and attending to the last offices; concluding in the Irish fashion by a regular row, getting drunk, and lying the great part of the night in the street.⁷⁹

For the Irish, open coffins were both the traditional and the essential celebration of the life of the deceased prior to the funeral, but for the Irishman to be branded as ‘the reason for the cholera outbreak’ was a serious issue for migrants and their place in the host society. Some experience in 1832 had alerted the General Board of Health (GBH) to the method of limiting the spread of disease by agreeing to regulate the customary influx into the district of Irish seasonal workers. ‘In the 1840s typhus fever was still frequently confused with other similar diseases, notably typhoid and relapsing fever, but neither of these were as lethal as typhus despite both displaying similar symptoms; relapsing fever was a louse-born disease like typhus, but typhoid was contracted through food and water sources’.⁸⁰ The Registrar General included both typhus and typhoid under a single heading until 1869, despite a clinical distinction between the two being medically accepted from 1849.⁸¹ Perhaps more significant than all the medical expertise applied, at this stage in the development of medical knowledge on the disease, were the reasons for its attack on the population and the fear it provoked. The Whitehaven Union chairman attributed typhus to a family’s living ‘above a room filled with potatoes, which decay very fast from the place being damp’.⁸² These miasmatic views were not easily dismissed amidst the housing conditions and poverty of the working classes, especially if one lived above a room containing putrefying potatoes emitting noxious gasses, when the nineteenth-century reason for disease transmission was believed to be in the poisoned air that one breathed. When the medical officer William Lily in the Berwick-upon-Tweed Union contracted typhus, and died as a result of treating an Irish vagrant, there was almost certainly the fear of further outbreaks.⁸³

The reluctance to have a burial only after the customary wake had taken place resulted in the inevitable objections. A witness to the Select Committee for the General Board of Health’s Report on Cholera at the height of the famine in 1848 provided graphic detail of one such event:

⁷⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 31 December 1831 (from an extract of a letter from, ‘a respectable resident at North Shields’, 25 December 1831).

⁸⁰ E. M. Crawford, ‘Migrant maladies: unseen lethal baggage’ in E. M. Crawford (ed.) *The hungry stream: essays on emigration and famine* (1997), p.141.

⁸¹ C. Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain*, Vol. II (Cambridge, 1894), p.205, in Darwen et al. ‘Irish fever’ in Lancashire in the Great Famine: Responses to a Public Health and refugee Crisis, 1846-48’ (Ulster University, 2017).

⁸² Christopher Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice in the age of Chadwick* (Cambridge 1998), p.210.

⁸³ Dick Hunter, ‘Cholera and the struggle for clean water in Berwick-upon-Tweed’, *The Local Historian*, 37, 2 (2007), p.107; see also F. Neal, *Black 47* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 132-7 for graphic accounts of the conditions of the poor migrants in Liverpool.

An old woman had died of cholera without any medical attendance...Two children living in the same house were taken ill and one died...then the ceremony of the wake was performed. About a dozen acquaintances of the deceased met together in this small room, with only one window opening into a narrow, crowded, and at that time a most filthy court. These people assembled in front of the corpse, some smoking, and all drinking.⁸⁴

The result of this gathering was the subsequent collapse of the mother and father of the children and the death of one of those present at the wake, similarly attacked by the disease. This was not uncommon in those areas where the Irish had settled. Testimonies were provided to the GBH by surgeons, medical practitioners and the police, of similar occurrences in England and Scotland.⁸⁵ However, there was a general acknowledgement by these witnesses that the Irish acquiesced by complying with the officers' wishes to restrict open- coffin wakes.⁸⁶

The connection of the death of Mallan to Irish behaviour patterns, was repeated in the 1847 epidemic when migrants, including the Irish, were blamed for the spread of the disease, in part due to the claim that some kept pigs in their houses. Rawlinson vividly described conditions in his district sanitary reports on Whitehaven and Carlisle when he said, 'The houses in these streets are occupied by the poorest class of society, in most cases by one family in each room...many of the inhabitants of this district keep pigs producing very great nuisance'.⁸⁷ Notwithstanding the evident health hazards of pigs within or adjacent to the dwellings, such misinterpretation for the reason and value of 'keeping a pig' indicated the distance the medical profession and social reformers' were in their understanding of the dependence and traditional reliance on this animal. The pig was as an essential element in the Irish migrants' armoury of survival strategies, one that they had employed for generations prior to fleeing their home country.

A service considered indispensable and culturally necessary for all migrants whatever their financial state, was the means to bury their kin. The 'collecting burial services' exploited the economic difficulties of the 'lower levels' of the working class by collecting small amounts of one and a half pence per week, which could raise four pounds in the longer-term.⁸⁸ Those at the bottom end of the scale sometimes managed to do this through dependence upon weekly

⁸⁴ *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic of Cholera* (1848-1849), papers 1273-5, p.129,

⁸⁵ *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic of Cholera* (1848-1849), papers 1273-5, p.131.

⁸⁶ *Report of the General Board of Health on the Epidemic of Cholera* (1848-1849), Table 4, p.196.

⁸⁷ Robert Rawlinson, *A Report of the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water, and Sanitary Conditions of the Inhabitants of the Town of Whitehaven*, 1849

⁸⁸ W. Ginsberg, 'Industrial Life Assurance', in John Belchem, 'Priests, publicans and the Irish poor: Ethnic enterprise and migrant networks in mid-nineteenth-century Liverpool', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 23, 2-3, p.208.

visits by streetwise collectors, ‘the penny-a-week death hunters’, but if the payments went into arrears the savings were confiscated by the insurer. The high mortality during the famine proved disastrous for these service providers keen to make a profit. The manager of St. Patricks Burial Society, the principle insurer in England at the time, explained to a Royal Commission enquiry into the financial affairs of the societies: ‘it was only the low Irish, the very worst class of all that we do not take, who, in my opinion, are not genuine Irish men; they are outcasts’,⁸⁹ an exclusion that must have numbered a great many of those on the margins of the poorest in society who landed in Whitehaven. Without supporting charities, or the help of the church, it would have been impossible for the destitute to bury their dead. Even coffin-less burials in consecrated ground were allowed by the church and became more common at this time when all other means were non-existent. In Liverpool, burying of the dead was carried out on a massive scale.⁹⁰ During April 1847 an average of twenty-two bodies were interned every day at the parochial cemetery in Cambridge Street. In the same cemetery 7,520 were interned, the majority Irish, during the same year.⁹¹

Frustratingly the minutes of the meetings held by the Board of Guardians of the Whitehaven Union during the period 1834-1860 have not survived and the correspondence between the Unions of Whitehaven, Cockermouth, Berwick –upon-Tweed and the Poor Law Board did not reveal any reference to an ‘Irish fever problem’. However, the Tynemouth Poor Law Union recorded growing numbers of vagrants for 1846-7 with growing concern and the following picture emerges when comparing the months of January to April of each year. In proportional terms the number of Irish vagrants leapt from 8% to 25% in the casual ward in this period, whilst the numbers of Scots and English vagrants decreased (Table 4.3). However, these figures can easily mask the reality of the proportion of accumulated numbers. The number of vagrants had more than doubled but the Irish total had escalated to more than seven times the level recorded just one year previously. Irish migrants were evidently willing and able to cross the west to east coast divide from Whitehaven to Tynemouth in considerable numbers and the potential alternatives in the east of the region were sufficient to override any hardship likely to be endured on the journey.

⁸⁹ 1873 (842), *Royal Commission for Friendly Societies Report*, XXII, qq. 25,920, 16,082; David Feldman, ‘Migrants, Immigrants and Welfare from the Old Poor Law to the Welfare State’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*: 6th series, 13 (2003), pp. 79-104; Michael Durey, ‘The Survival of Irish Culture in Britain, 1800-1845’, *Historical Studies*, 20 (1982), pp. 14-35.

⁹⁰ *The Times*, 8 May 1847; Liverpool Record Office, CEM/283/MRY/11-13, *Register of Burials*, Saint Mary’s, Cambridge Street, Liverpool.

⁹¹ Neal, *Black 47* (1998), p.130.

	1846				1847			
	English	Irish	Scots	Total in casual ward	English	Irish	Scots	Total in casual ward
Jan	53	6	16	75	100	49	35	184
Feb	73	16	33	122	135	35	54	224
Mar	44	4	29	77	112	86	52	250
April	44	2	37	83	89	43	63	195
Totals	214 (60%)	28 (8%)	115 (32%)	357	436 (51%)	213 (25%)	204 (24%)	853

Table 4.3: Vagrants in the Tynemouth workhouse casual ward. 1846-7⁹²

Not all of these individuals would have been on the tramp looking for work. Some would have been ‘professional tramps’ using the workhouses for an overnight stop before continuing on their way, but for many it would have been a temporary shelter before moving on into lodgings elsewhere in their genuine search for work.

The Guardians were equally concerned with the host population when the costs of vagrants in the workhouse were raised. The threat of disease repeatedly made reference to the ‘verminous state of the vagrant’ and it was this that inevitably provided fuel for the fear of Irish fever as well as the fear of rate-payer pressure to moderate the poor rate. As a result, the Whitehaven Board of Guardians resolved to spend money on the provision of a fever ward to accommodate the problem rather than subject the staff and the inmates of the workhouse to the risk of infection.⁹³ This decision was probably also motivated by the Registrar General’s report that suggested there was justification for alarm about the number of victims of cholera:

During the last two or three months [October to December] large numbers of the poor from Ireland have crowded themselves in the district, droves of them rambling about looking for lodgings. Many of the poor creatures have died from cold producing fever and disease. In many cases they had been in the in England for only a few weeks. The sad condition and the habits of these poor Irish immigrants have, no doubt, contributed to deteriorate the health of Liverpool, Glasgow and Bristol, the ports through which they enter as well as raise the mortality of such towns’.⁹⁴

In contrast, the Whitehaven workhouse had only eight Irish and two English tramps and vagrants in residence on 19 Dec 1847, and eleven Irish, six English and two Scots on 7 Sept 1848.⁹⁵ The

⁹² TWRO, PUTY/2/30, *Vagrant Record Book*, 1846-7.

⁹³ TNA, MH12/1708, 7 September 1848, *Correspondence of the Clerk to the Whitehaven Board of Guardians to the Poor Law Board*, 1847-48.

⁹⁴ 1846, *Ninth Annual Report of Registrar General*, p. xxviii.

⁹⁵ 1847-8, *Tenth Annual Report of Registrar General*, p. xxv.

proportional cost of these numbers should not have caused any degree of alarm, but it was the prevalence of fever amongst the vagrant groups that was well known and the decision to erect a fever ward on the assumption that numbers of cases could easily escalate, must have been considered prudent.

As the cholera epidemic took hold in 1848, the impact on Cockermouth thirteen miles inland from Whitehaven took everyone by surprise. It struck with unusual ferocity when compared with other towns in England and Wales. Cockermouth ranked fourth of 114 towns affected when numbers of deaths were recorded on one day in September 1848.⁹⁶ In descending order, Wolverhampton was the worst affected town with 39 deaths, next Manchester, a heartland of the Irish migrant population with sixteen deaths, then Tynemouth with fifteen, followed by Cockermouth with thirteen. The depth of anxiety about the threat to public health posed by famine victims was matched by an increasing concern about the cost of relief. Death on this scale resulted in cultural difficulties, particularly for the Irish Roman Catholics. Within a year Cockermouth's death toll from the disease had risen to fifty and the populous may have been tempted to conclude that the Irish were of significance in this total, but they would have been wrong. An analysis of the names of the victims on that fateful day indicated that *only two* were Irish,⁹⁷ although others may have been Irish-born wives of English men, or children in these families. This was clear evidence that cholera was most unlikely to be an 'Irish import' but a water-borne disease without nationality or class preference. With hindsight, the Cockermouth water supply, from whatever source, was more suspect when compared to other towns.

Inevitably the cash flow of the dispensaries was a key component of available treatment. In Whitehaven, the fever hospital treated 104 patients in 1846 and 112 in the first half of 1847, which resulted in a shortage of funds. When receipts in 1846 were £381, further admittances were stopped until the situation was resolved.⁹⁸ Similar concerns were expressed at the Carlisle Dispensary as subscriptions began to decline in 1840, but a concerted effort in the call for donations had the desired effect.⁹⁹ In the meantime, treatment for the poor would have been in the home, which for most migrant Irish would have been quite normal for the reasons already explained. Perhaps the lack of access to hospital facilities would have caused the English further anxiety and exacerbated the antipathy they felt towards those whom they saw as excluding them

⁹⁶ 1848, *Return of Deaths from Cholera and Diarrhoea reported to the General Board of Health this 22nd Day of September 1848*.

⁹⁷ CRO, YPR 26/236, *Victims of cholera epidemic, Cockermouth*, 1849.

⁹⁸ CRO, YTHOS/2, *Record of Accounts*, Whitehaven fever hospital, 1849.

⁹⁹ Carlisle public library, *A Plan of the Carlisle Dispensary*, 'Comparative Statements' [1810: £247 9s 7d; 1820: £241 6s 6d; 1830: £274 2s 7d; 1840: £250 0s 1d; 1850: £330 16 3d].

from a facility designed for the English rather than the immigrant. Surprisingly, acknowledgement of any crisis was absent from the minutes of the hospital board meetings (1829-1862) which recorded almost exclusively, expenditure on salaries of staff, materials, repairs and the search for new medical appointments.¹⁰⁰ Nor was there reference to the cholera epidemic which appeared in 1848 when fifty-one deaths from cholera were recorded in Cockermouth and Workington and forty-five deaths in Maryport.¹⁰¹ In the same year the only reference to any shortfall in financing in these towns was in 1849 when the need to raise funds by organising a bazaar was discussed, and this was a regular annual event rather than a special occurrence. Moreover, in 1852 it was recorded that ‘fewer [patients] were treated than the previous year due to the town’s people being in a healthier state than previously’.¹⁰² When compared to the health problems the authorities had experienced in the 1840s this may have been true but ten years later the authorities do not appear to have done much to prevent a reoccurrence of the problems. A further report in 1861 on the sanitary state of the town demonstrated that it was just as unhealthy as it had been at the time of the Rawlinson report in 1848.¹⁰³ Generally there appears to have been some blurring of the actual state of affairs: no migrant problem: no epidemic; no alarm concerning mortality rates and no serious financial crises. It was in effect business as usual for the committee as repairs to the building, staff recruitment and salary reviews were progressed. Irish migrants would certainly have benefitted from the medical care provided from the poor law and other sources. However, the ever-present threat of removal, discussed in some detail in chapter 2, hung over their lives whenever some reason for contact with the authorities became necessary.¹⁰⁴ For the migrant, an alternative strategy for acquiring medical help was through the workhouse provided they met the required criteria.

4 (vi) *Migrants in the workhouse*

The number of Irish paupers in the workhouses of the far north may be the key to testing the assertion made by Frank Neal that ‘most Famine Irish did not receive support from the Poor Law following the initial wave of immigration from the end of 1846 to mid-1847’.¹⁰⁵ Reasons

¹⁰⁰ CRO, YTHOS/2, *Record of Accounts*, Whitehaven fever hospital, 1849.

¹⁰¹ CRO, YPR 26/236, *Victims of cholera epidemic*.

¹⁰² CRO, YPR 26/236, *Victims of cholera epidemic*.

¹⁰³ J. S. Bristowe, *Report on the state of Whitehaven town*, 1861.

¹⁰⁴ Lewis Darwen, Donald M. MacRaid, Brian Gurrin, Liam Kennedy, ‘‘Irish fever’ in Lancashire during the Great Famine: Responses to a Public Health and Refugee Crisis, 1846-48’ (Ulster University, 2017).

¹⁰⁵ F. Neal, *Black 47* (1998), p.251.

for this centre around the idea that applicants would jeopardise their residence by application for relief and be forced to repatriate to Ireland by an Order of Removal. Was there a possibility that they could at least survive in England or Wales and, as a last resort, was there a place for them in the workhouse despite the apparent obstacles? One local worthy asked the Guardians to relax their rules as ‘there are in this town a number of Irish who are afraid, if they applied for relief, of being removed to Ireland, where there is an absolute famine, and yet many of these poor creatures are starving and dying of fever’.¹⁰⁶ As an example of empathy shown for the distress of the migrants this should not be perceived as a singular sentiment as there is no way of knowing just how many others were of the same mind. The migrants’ fear of removal was clearly a factor which governed the lives of those who could have benefitted from the minimal health care available had they felt less threatened by the removal process.

The scale of the relief measures was escalating at the time, not only because of the burden of the sickness on particular families, but also because the impact of epidemic disease upon the economies of the afflicted communities:¹⁰⁷

The Irish newspapers teem with recitals of the most heart rending misery...The workhouses are many of them so full that their doors have been closed against all further applicants, though hundreds of poor wretched creatures, in the last stages of famine and disease, are vainly seeking admission. Where or when this dreadful calamity is to end no one can tell...Many are buried in the wretched garments which covered their bodies whilst living.¹⁰⁸

This dramatic statement was made in a Carlisle newspaper as the black year of 1847 opened and the victims of famine fled their homes to seek alternative shelter. Most fearful for the host population was the unpredictable nature of the future outcome of the crisis: how long it would last; how many would come to England; where would they all go? Questions like these were at the heart of the matter but with no finite period to measure the crisis and the prospect of a secure outcome they must have caused alarm for the authorities. Historical hindsight has of course the advantage of seeing the period as a specific six-year interval in the history of Britain but the daunting prospect of a further five, ten or twenty years of continuous provision for a huge migrant population was the preoccupation of Boards of Guardians and central government alike.

There seems to have been an implicit acceptance in the historiography that Irish and Scots paupers did not stay long in the workhouse, perhaps a night or two on a casual basis on their journey to other places in their hunt for work. An inspection of the census enumerators’

¹⁰⁶ *Manchester Times*, 15 May 1847.

¹⁰⁷ I. Wrightson, *Ralph Taylor’s Summer* (Yale, 2011), p.44.

¹⁰⁸ *Cumberland Pacquet and Ware’s Whitehaven Advertiser*, 19 January 1847, p.2.

books (CEBs) indicates otherwise. There were many Irish and Scots paupers in the workhouses throughout the country, living as short or longer-term occupants, including those in the far north, which leads to some interesting questions. First, could the number of Irish and Scots paupers in the workhouses provide an indication to their right to relief as irremovable residents, and second, did the authorities in some unions take a different approach to provision of relief than others, by perhaps turning a blind eye to eligibility when faced with such desperate cases? The methodology adopted to answer this question will be shaped by the evaluation of the census data from the 1851 records and an assessment of the magistrates' decisions on Orders of Removal in the courts.

From the 1851 census data three pairs of counties across the country were tested: the two largest metropolitan areas, Middlesex and Lancashire; two rural counties in the south of roughly equal size, Berkshire and Cambridgeshire; and the two counties comprising the far north, Cumberland and Northumberland. (Table 4.4).

	1 Population	2 Scots Population %	3 Irish Population %	4 Workhouse Accommodation
Middlesex	1,878,379	0.59	1.40	25,134
Lancashire	2,094,800	1.33	9.26	17,282
Berkshire	199,139	0.26	0.35	4,031
Cambridgeshire	191,338	0.16	0.51	3,002
Cumberland	194,540	3.81	5.05	1,917
Northumberland	301,388	5.38	4.18	1,986
England and Wales	21,185,010	0.61	3.46	

Table 4.4: Irish and Scots paupers in workhouses 1851.¹⁰⁹

The two largest metropolitan areas, one in the south and one in the north, had widely different Irish populations. Lancashire, when compared to Middlesex had nearly seven times as many Irish (9.26%) and twice as many Scots, but only two thirds of the number of workhouse places available. This strongly suggests that this most significant Irish presence in Lancashire did not place a proportionally high demand on the poor relief of the authorities. In other words, the Irish were not as dependent on the Lancashire workhouses as the Middlesex Irish were. The

¹⁰⁹ 1852-53 (1691-1), *Census of Great Britain*, 1851.

two large counties of roughly equal size, Berkshire and Cambridgeshire, displayed similar migrant numbers but Berkshire provided 33 per cent more places in the workhouses. The far north counties had a conspicuous Scots and Irish presence exceeded only by Lancashire. They had equal numbers of places available in the workhouse but Northumberland had thirty per cent more inhabitants and a larger Scots population compared to Cumberland where the Irish were dominant.

	1 Ratio of Pauper places/1000 pop. (rank)	2 Expenditure (rank)	3 Number of indoor paupers (per cent of pop.)	4 Pauper spending per pauper (rank)
Middlesex	13.38 (3)	£510,798 (1)	42,076 (2.24%)	£12.13 (6)
Lancashire	8.25 (5)	£374,536 (2)	17,387 (0.83%)	£21.54 (2)
Berkshire	20.26 (1)	£63,326 (5)	4,639 (2.33%)	£13.65 (5)
Cambridgeshire	15.72 (2)	£75,173 (4)	4,076 (2.13%)	£18.44 (3)
Cumberland	9.86 (4)	£39,030 (6)	2,548 (1.31%)	£15.31 (4)
Northumberland	6.29 (6)	£83,283 (3)	2,743 (0.91%)	£30.36 (1)
England and Wales		£4,962,704	126,488 (2.55%)	£39.23

Table 4.5: Paupers and Poor Law Union spending across England, 1851¹¹⁰

When considering the cost of such differentials the following unexpected statistics emerge (Table 4.5). Northumberland had the lowest ratio of pauper places per 1000 population (6.29 per 1000) but the highest spending of £30.36 per pauper. Cumberland had a near median spending per pauper of £15.3, which was only half as much as Northumberland. The two lowest spending levels Berkshire (a large rural county) and Middlesex (a large metropolitan county) had very different ratios of pauper places per 1000 population. Middlesex, as could be expected in an urban area, had four times the Irish population as Berkshire but a proportionally similar number of paupers, which was close to the national average. The national average of spending

¹¹⁰ 1852-53 (1691-1), *Census of Great Britain, 1851*, Population Tables II, clxxviii.

per pauper was £39.23, a figure higher than all the counties tested here, but this would have included capital spending on buildings, administrative costs and all the additional manpower required to facilitate the process of dealing with the increased flow of paupers into the system, such as relieving officers, overseers and clerks who would have all added to the overall sum expended. This sample of the six counties provide some indication of how complex the web of socioeconomic and demographic elements were, and affirms the research of King, O’Leary and Boyer when discussing regional variations.¹¹¹ However, the evidence does not support King’s overall view that the poor law was ‘relatively generous’ in the south and east and ‘relatively harsh’ in the north and west.¹¹² The ‘spatial flavour to the character of the new poor laws’¹¹³, as expounded in King’s theory, did indeed exist, but the far north was considerably more generous than in the south, for the counties used in this comparison. Hindle concurs with this idea that ‘extraordinary differentials in the geography of relief’, existed between the regions.¹¹⁴ This further emphasises reasons beyond economic circumstances for the regional differences where the migrant relied more on neighbourliness, kinships and charity, for support. The principal variable here for the Unions however was the amount of spending on each pauper and how this could be minimised, not necessarily the well-being of the paupers driven to claim relief.

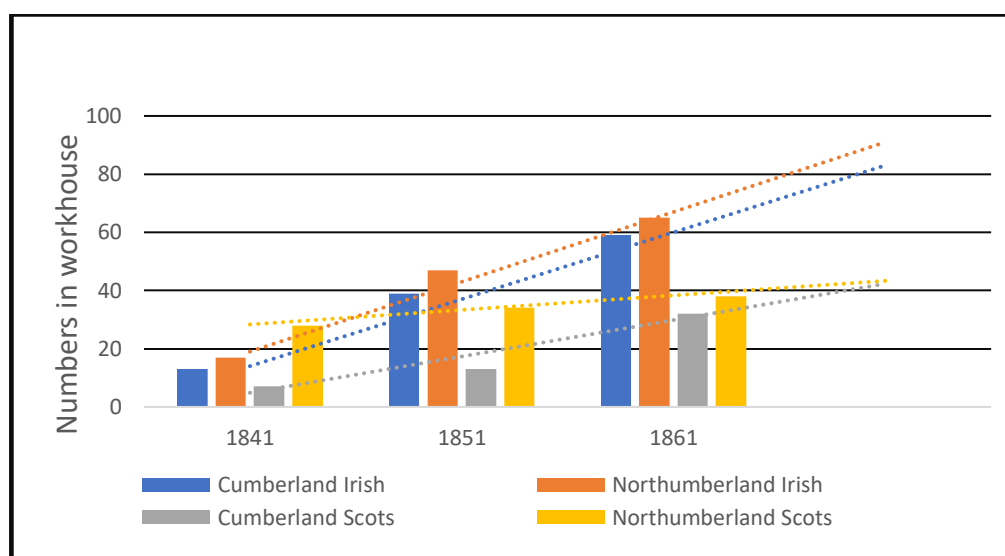


Figure 4.3: Numbers of Irish and Scots paupers in workhouses¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Steven King, *Poverty and welfare in England, 1700-1859: a regional perspective* (Manchester, 2000), p.261; Paul O’Leary, ‘Immigration and Integration, the Irish in Wales, 1798-1922 (Cardiff, 2000), p.86; G. R. Boyer, ‘Review’, *The Journal of Economic History*, 62 (2002), pp.873-874.

¹¹² King, *Poverty and welfare*, chapters 6 and 7.

¹¹³ King, *Poverty and welfare*, p.256.

¹¹⁴ S. Hindle, *On the parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England, 150-1750*, pp. 283-285.

¹¹⁵ 1841-61 *Census of England and Wales, Enumerators’ Books*, HO 107, RG9.

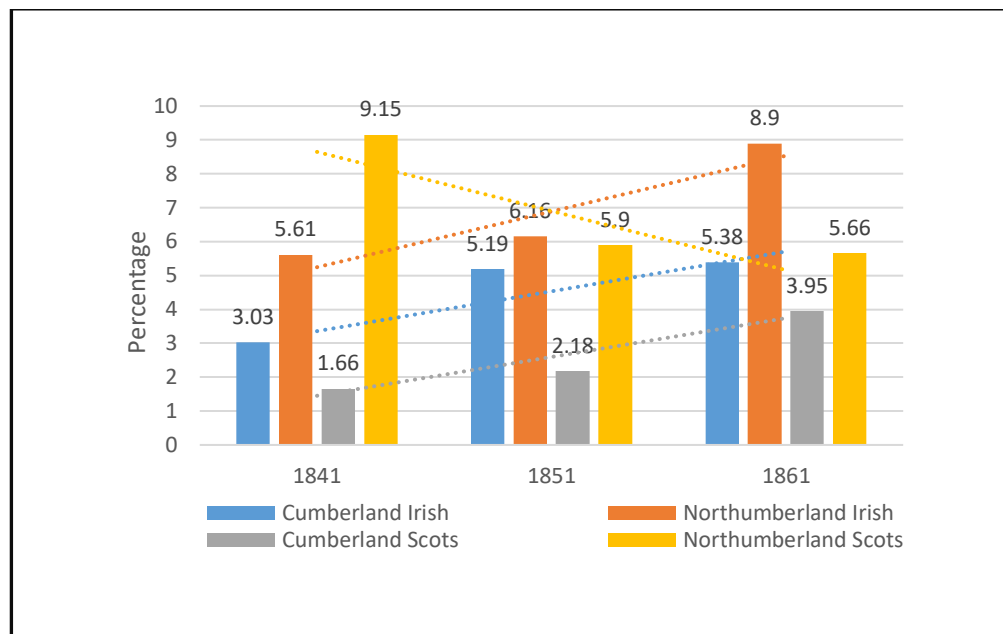


Figure 4.4: Percentages of Irish and Scots paupers in workhouses.¹¹⁶

Taking a closer look at the workhouses in the far north, Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the numbers and proportions of Irish and Scots paupers in the workhouses in both counties, from 1841 to 1861. There was a significant difference between the numbers of Irish and the number of Scots. The trend-line for the proportion of Scots in Northumberland indicated a continuous decline whilst the Irish almost doubled their presence (Figure 4.4). Furthermore, there was a clear reversal in the proportion of Irish/Scots presence in Northumberland over the twenty-year period. This provided a strong indication that the Irish were proportionately more inclined to be inmates in the Northumberland workhouse than their proportion of the population suggested. Puddu's thesis that there was more empathy towards the Irish in Northumberland than in Cumberland may be a possible reason for this. On the other hand, numerically there were still more Irish in the workhouses in Northumberland than Cumberland.

Although the county figures were important, particularly for the purpose of government returns, it was the consideration of financial liability in the parishes across the region that required more attention. A comparison of the Irish and Scots pauper totals in the workhouses in six towns across the region gave some indication of what they had to deal with (Figures 4.5 and

¹¹⁶ 1841-61 *Census of England and Wales, Enumerators' Books*, HO 107, RG9.

4.6). Whitehaven and Tynemouth had relatively low levels of occupancy of Irish and Scots in 1841, but the numbers had increased significantly by 1861. At the same time, migrant numbers in Cockermouth rose steadily as Morpeth numbers fell, and Wigton and Hexham numbers both rose from decade to decade. What is clear was the potential for the pauper rate to increase further, particularly in Tynemouth where the proportional occupancy level of migrants was three times the rate of that in Whitehaven.

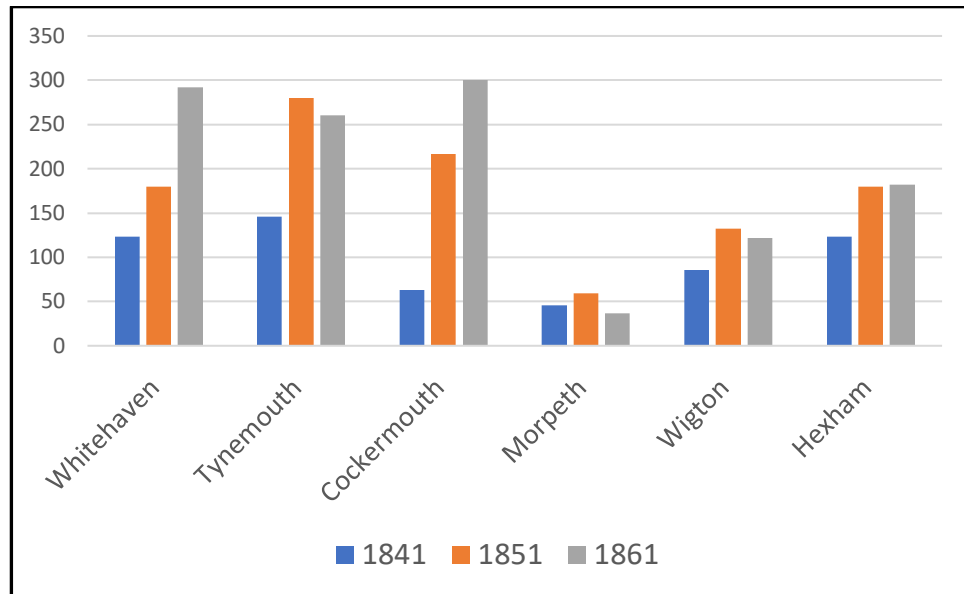


Figure 4.5: Paupers in workhouses in selected towns in the far north¹¹⁷

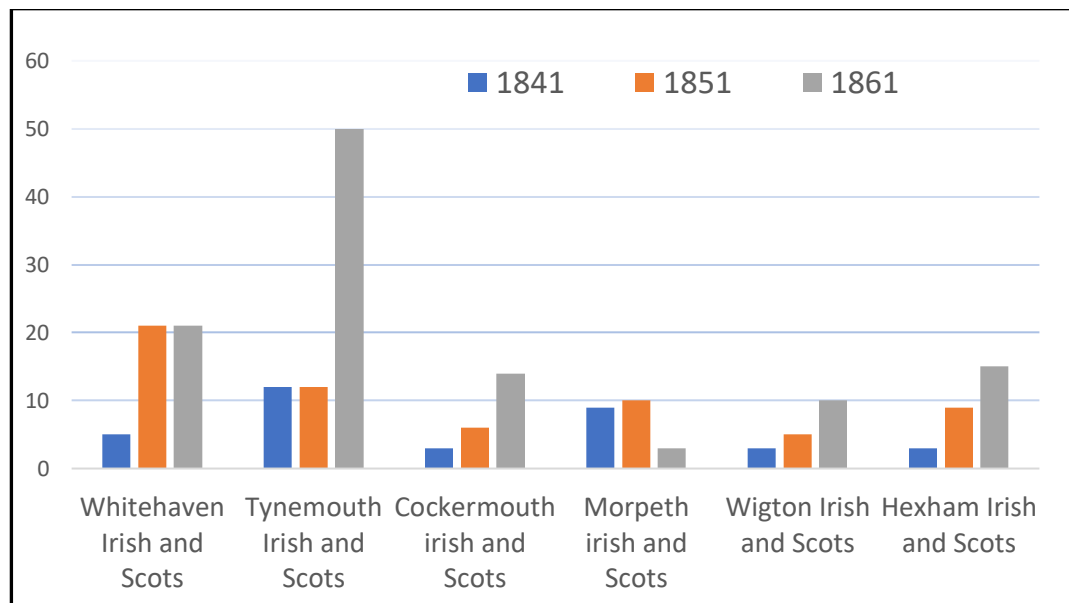


Figure 4.6: Irish and Scots paupers in workhouses in selected towns north¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ 1841-61 *Census of England and Wales, Enumerators' Books*, HO 107, RG9.

¹¹⁸ 1841-61 *Census of England and Wales, Enumerators' Books*, HO 107, RG9.

The financial demands generated by applications for relief by the injured, the sick and the destitute inevitably took their toll on the union's finances. Morpeth Guardians' responses to migrants were conditioned by the costs they were likely to incur for the provision of relief and medical services. They were recorded as being extremely agitated when referring to the burden the ratepayer had to bear in earlier years: 'The vestry affairs of this town have been frequently the subject of angry debate, squibbery, and litigation, occasioned by the dissatisfaction of many inhabitants with the amount and application of the money raised for the poor'.¹¹⁹ It was this upward trend in overall numbers of pauper applications and the increasing number of Irish and Scots paupers in places like Cockermouth, when compared to the peak and decline after 1851 for places like Morpeth, that continued to haunt the Guardians' balance sheet. With the proportion of migrants in Cockermouth at 2.8% and in Morpeth 17% it was not surprising that the Morpeth authorities raised their protest first (Table 4.10, Appendix). The fortnightly meeting of the Morpeth Board of Guardians was a forum much reported by the local press and an article in July 1857 spelled out the growing concerns of certain members of the Board. The cost of provision of a new workhouse was on the agenda and a Mr Donkin aired his views with zeal. He compared the comforts of the existing establishment with those of the residents in the nearby town of Tynemouth where some homes had already become infamous as the dwellings of Irish immigrants when he said:

For 20 years he had sat on that Board and had listened to the official outcries for a workhouse in conformity with the tastes and regulations of the Poor Law Commissioners... yet it [the workhouse] might bear a comparison in the shelter and comfort it afforded to its unfortunate inmates, to the great majority of the cottage homes of Northumberland met with in Tyneside..., and he warned those of the folly of becoming parties to an unnecessary expenditure. He would never consent to place the pauper in a better physical position than the independent workman...and would challenge his learned friends to prove by statistics that the mortality or the morality either, was lower in the Morpeth Workhouse than in other Unions.¹²⁰

The tone of this lengthy statement echoed the sentiments of many of the witnesses called to give evidence to the Poor Law enquiry in 1834 that, 'the workhouse appears to be a place in which the aged and impotent are so maintained in comfort and the able-bodied supported, that they prefer it to a life of independent labour'.¹²¹ This persuasive rhetoric, which attempted to justify

¹¹⁹ Manix and Whellan, *History, Directory & Gazetteer of Durham & Northumberland*, 1827, p.449.

¹²⁰ *Morpeth Herald*, July 11 1857, p.5.

¹²¹ 1834 (44), *Report from His Majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*, pp.30-31.

the comparison between the barbarous state of the workhouse and the worst of habitation in the town, was a well-practiced form of public speaking, as common then as it is today. With migrant numbers as low as they were, when compared to the overall number of paupers in the workhouse, Donkin managed to persuade his fellow members to defer expenditure of building a new workhouse for a further nine years before the foundation stone was finally laid.¹²² In the meantime migrants' presence in the workhouse were not all short-term, many had been long-term residents there for years.

Frank Neal's hypothesis that 'few migrants would have applied for relief for fear of being removed back to Ireland' is worth examining more closely here.¹²³ Can this hypothesis claim any validity when considering long-term occupancy of workhouses in the far north? First it was clear that sickness granted *de facto* temporary irremovable status to the non-settled poor. This would have included all Irish famine migrants with 'Irish fever'.¹²⁴ It did not allow for long term residence in the workhouse for those without legal settlement, but after 1846 settlement was granted after five years residence. By 1861 the number of long-term inmates in the workhouses had claimed the attention of the government and became an issue that required some clarification.¹²⁵ An Order was made by the House of Commons which requested:

...from each WORKHOUSE [uppercase in text source] in England and Wales, of the Name of every ADULT PAUPER in each WORKHOUSE who has been an inmate of the Workhouse during a continuous Period of Five Years; stating the Amount of Time that each of such Inmates shall have been in the Workhouse, and the reason assigned why such Persons are unable to maintain themselves: And, of the Number of such inmates who have been brought up in a District or separate Workhouse School.¹²⁶

The important point here is that residents should have been in the workhouse for at least ten years if they were considered to be possible famine migrants. No specific reasons for the order were provided in the document nor, it seems, elsewhere. Perhaps there was a concern that the right of settlement earned by migrants after five years residence could become a long-term problem if allowed to continue unchecked. The total number of occupants recorded by the Registrar General from returns provided by the poor law unions across the country was 2024. In the far north counties of Cumberland and Northumberland there were 280, representing 13.8% of the total. From the data in this document it was possible to extract those names of

¹²² *Morpeth Herald*, 24 February 1866, p.5.

¹²³ F. Neal, *Black 47*, p.280.

¹²⁴ *Tenth Annual report of the registrar General*, pp.228-289; *Eleventh Annual Report of the registrar General*, pp.294-295.

¹²⁵ 1846 (526), *A bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the removal of the poor*, pp.1-3.

¹²⁶ 1861 (490), *Paupers in workhouses*, p.1.

Irish and Scots who were long term residents and cross reference these with the 1861 census data on the Enumerators' sheets (Table 4.6).

	Number	Proportion /comment
All long-term paupers in England and Wales	2024	c. 50% of capacity
Irish and Scots paupers in the far north	280	13.8% of total
Irish and Scots <u>long-term</u> occupants in the far north	9	3.2%

Table 4.6: Long term pauper occupancy of workhouses in far north (5 years or more) 1861.¹²⁷

Union District	Name	Age	Term of residence (years)	Condition	Place of Birth
Carlisle	Ellen Sowerby	86	10	Sickness	Scotland
	Betty Lewis	58	15	Old age; has been a lunatic	Ireland
Longtown	William Beatty	73	10	Old age	Scotland
Penrith	William Askew	64	5	Destitution	Scotland
	James McGee	84	5	Destitution	Ireland
Whitehaven	William Magee	79	10	Old age	Ireland
Glendale	Martha Wood	41	7	Imbecile,	Ireland
Tynemouth	William Doherty	29	25	Subject to fits	Ireland
	William Campbell	58	5	Sickness and mental infirmity	Scotland

Table 4.7: Irish and Scots Paupers in workhouses for five years or more in 1861.¹²⁸

Nine of these individuals were found in the far north counties of Cumberland and Northumberland which represented 3.2% of the total number of inmates five Irish and four Scots (Table 4.7). This highlights the following important points: the number was extremely small; there were roughly equal numbers of Irish and Scots; more than half were sixty years or over. The reasons for long-term residence were either, compassionate (old age, sickness, destitution, mental condition), or rights of settlement and, considering the very small number, the costs

¹²⁷ 1861 (490), *Paupers in workhouses*.

¹²⁸ *Census of England and Wales*, 'Public Institutions' [workhouses], 1861.

could not have been an issue of importance for the Board of Guardians at the time. Several reasons could be suggested for such a small number: there were very few migrants with legal settlement in the parish; migrants preferred and managed to find accommodation with kith or kin, even in a distressed condition; or they were afraid to claim asylum in the workhouse under the threat of removal to Ireland. Neal's hypothesis, when applied to the far north, appears to be correct when considering the small number relieved on a long-term basis, but there were many more migrants in the workhouse for shorter periods than the five-year term. The Registrar General records 136 Irish and 144 Scots in the workhouse for less than five years in the same year, so there was some degree of tolerance of the migrant in the workhouse across the region after the famine, whether by legal occupation through settlement rights or empathy for their condition on application for admittance.

4 (vii) *Conclusion*

The zenith of migrant influx in the far north, came at a most difficult period for the poor law authorities. Urban councils such as Whitehaven and Carlisle struggled to implement improvements to their infrastructure and work on the squalid housing areas had hardly started as the crisis unfolded. In their bid to escape the poverty they found in the west of the region many migrants trekked eastwards only to be met by similar circumstances, but some evidence indicates that they were met with a more positive reception than they had experienced in Cumberland. The trade recession of 1847 had tightened its grip on the economy of not only the poor migrant but the middle class and their ability to pay their poor rate. The result was a sense of outrage that the Irish poor were being provided for at the expense of the English poor. Guardians, as professionals in the community such as farmers, accountants, shop-keepers, clergy and publicans, generally thought that the system was being abused by the undeserving, particularly the Irish. Despite this, church collections and charity workers were generous in their contribution for the poor. This compensated to some degree for the exclusion of the Irish poor from the private schemes of business men like J. Curwen who offered insurance to a selected number of trades people.

In 1847 there was a triple problem for the Irish: migration, economic depression and the typhus fever epidemic. Without passenger lists for boat landings at Whitehaven during the famine period there is no way of knowing exactly how many stepped onto the quay-side from Belfast or Dublin apart from the occasional newspaper report which provided a clue by reference to boats bringing a few hundred Irish passengers to the shores of Whitehaven. The reception by

the host, at best tacit and at worst openly hostile, was the first hurdle that the migrants had to overcome but the badge of disease, so firmly affixed to them, made their arrival doubly difficult. With the workhouses full to capacity in the 'receiving towns', migrants had one overwhelming concern – food and shelter wherever they could find it.

It was clear that the Irish and Scots paupers were receiving relief from the authorities in workhouses across the country on a casual and longer-term basis. Neal's view on the subject that there was a reluctance by the Irish migrants to appeal to the authorities for relief or medical help because they feared removal back to Ireland, is partially substantiated and may have been true when the evidence of the deaths of three young children in Penrith are considered. There can be little doubt that this punitive policy was influenced by anti-Irish prejudice as much as a desire to improve public health. As poor rates rose, and as the spread of epidemic disease began encroaching upon areas inhabited by the native population, sympathy for the plight of the Irish diminished. Practical difficulties in seeking and obtaining medical help from the Dispensary in Carlisle were more likely to have deterred Irish migrants than the fear of removal, particularly if the problem was typhus-related with all its prejudicial fears for the host population. Furthermore, the mythical attitude of some in their attempts to define reasons for the disease must have been extremely unhelpful.

Whitehaven, Liverpool and Newcastle were all served by a variety of charities managed by the Victorian middle class, in particular, women who achieved a level of efficiency which enabled them to handle several thousand people in the soup kitchens on any one day. The churches mobilised their flocks to provide for the poor in cash and kind but not without the opprobrium of the press and certain sections of the public, including church figures and notables in the towns. There was a marked difference in spending on indoor paupers between the counties of the far north. Northumberland spent twice as much per pauper as Cumberland and when compared with the southern counties selected for analysis the regional spending of the far north proved to be far more generous. The authorities continued to have concerns about the rising numbers and costs of paupers in the workhouses and the government call for long-term occupancy figures showed that 13.8% of these were in the far north and of these only two per cent were Irish. Reasons for the Guardians' willingness to provide in-door relief could have been due to various factors such as: legal settlement in the parish; numbers insignificant enough to raise concerns; a perception that the jurisdiction had to be 'kept clean', without the scandal of people begging or dying on the streets and to provide soup at minimal expense and send the destitute on their way, which was seen to be the 'Christian thing' to do. Differentials in costs

between counties and towns could have been due to a variable approach in decision making about those eligible for relief, or even marked differences in efficiency levels, but these would have been driven by rising numbers of migrant relief applicants across the region.

Chapter 5

On the margins of poverty in Whitehaven and Cleator

5 (i) *Investigation and authority reports*

At present Whitehaven attracts within it all the wretchedness and misery of the district, and degrades every unfortunate labourer seeking work there down to a common level. The property of Ireland swarms over to a kindred misery; disease, death and oppressive poor-rates, are the consequence.¹

This grim portrait of the labourer's life in Robert Rawlinson's report to the General Board of Health in 1849 revealed the wretchedness that awaited the Irish migrants who came to Britain in the hope of a better life. His evocative description suggests something of the personal connection he must have felt, as the man who had the power to change the lives of many through his timely assessment of the health of the inhabitants and the conditions in which they lived. His controversial report, produced under the direction of a government keen to improve the sanitation of towns in England and Wales, was written in order 'to place the town in such a sanitary condition as shall reduce its mortality rate to below 23 in 1000', a condition based on the national average.² Places like Liverpool, as centres for the mass influx of migrants were recording a mortality rate as high as 36 per 1000.³ This data did, however, reflect all the accidents of a system of medical care based in dispensaries and charity hospitals, not just the housing of the inhabitants.⁴ The report's controversial character lay in its blunt portrayal of the circumstances and condition of the poor, which the authorities in Whitehaven would not inclined to accept as their responsibility. It was here, and in the adjacent villages such as Cleator Moor, where similarly high levels of mortality were found and can be seen as an indicator that this rural area and smaller towns can be compared with the larger towns in the more industrialised urban areas further south. All this was hardly new material evidence after so much had been done to demonstrate the state of the poor in the previous decades. The chapter will go on to examine the housing conditions that Rawlinson described in this old eighteenth century port town and the new textile and iron-mining villages of the area. It will provide evidence of how the Irish and Scots poor lived on

¹ Robert Rawlinson, *A Report of the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water, and Sanitary Conditions of the Inhabitants of the Town of Whitehaven*, 1849, pp.8-11.

² Rawlinson, *A Report of the General Board of Health*, p.9.

³ E. M. Crawford, *The Hungry Stream* (Belfast, 1997), p.143.

⁴ C. Hamlin, 'Could you starve to death in England in 1839? The Chadwick-Farr controversy and the loss of the 'social' in Public Health'. *American Journal of Public Health*, 85, 6 (1995), pp. 856-66.

the margins of society alongside and in similar circumstances to the English; how they survived in their homes, faced as they were with a plethora of health, diet and employment problems; and test the assumption that the English poor lived differently to the Irish and the Scots poor. In the context of a national situation which was coming more and more under the scrutiny of Westminster. To this end, the chronological and spatial dimensions of poverty will be evaluated using data and examples of the human condition collected from newspapers, central and local government archives and census enumerators' books all in the context of a national situation which was coming more and more under the scrutiny of Westminster.

George Cornewall Lewis' seminal comprehensive survey of migrant poverty in 1836, which emerged from the Irish Poor Commission's investigation, had commanded the attention of the authorities and the public in 1836 but with minimal practical effect. Written two years after the landmark legislation of the Poor Law Amendment Act, it provided a benchmark for the assessment of the poor in designing the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838. The habits, habitation and morality of the Irish were a focus of this document and witnesses were not difficult to find to testify for the record. Lewis prefaced his summary of these testimonies with the statement, '...the Irish emigration into Britain is an example of a less civilised population spreading themselves, as a kind of substratum, beneath a more civilised community'.⁵ He used the testimony of Dr. J. P. Kay, a medical officer in Manchester, to bolster the credibility of his report when he wrote 'the house of an Irish man is that of a person in a lower state of civilisation than that of the population of this country not only as regards his domestic conveniences, but those moral relations which should subsist between himself and the members of his family'.⁶ Lewis went on to describe how and where they lived and stated that 'they are collected in the lowest, dampest, dirtiest, most unhealthy, and ruinous parts of the town', usually occupying a room, at most two, crowded together in lodging houses without distinction of age or sex, generating and communicating disease.⁷ Such language separated the Irish poor from the 'poor' *per se* by placing them on the outside of society in a marginalised socio-economic group, which fuelled the debate focussed on migrants but did little to change the circumstances in which they lived.

It was Edwin Chadwick, Secretary to the Commission who administered the new poor law and famous for his Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population (1842), who established Rawlinson's position with the General Board of Health founded in

⁵ 1836 (40), *Report of the State of the Irish in Great Britain*, p. xl.

⁶ 1836 (40), *Report of the State of the Irish in Great Britain*, p. xl.

⁷ 1836 (40), *Report of the State of the Irish in Great Britain*, p. xi.

1848. Alongside others he was given the task of inspecting and reporting on the conditions of the housing in towns throughout England and Wales. He was heavily influenced by Kay, whose opinions on the causes of fever included insufficient sewers and drains, noxious fumes and overcrowded burial grounds.⁸ His rather eclectic category of ‘causes [*of disease*] originating in habits’ included reference to the state of the lodging houses (those for vagrants and a certain class of the Irish poor referred to as *common* lodging houses); crowded houses; inappropriate dwellings (cellars and those keeping or near to pigs); and the unwillingness to be hospitalized or vaccinated. These were all perceived as yard-sticks for inspection purposes by the Commissioners. Attempts to define these traits as ‘habit’ meets with difficulty. Was finding oneself in crowded accommodation as all that one could afford, to be described as a habit? Or, the unwillingness to be vaccinated for fear of being removed to Ireland as a result of declaring your pauperized state, a habit also? Kay’s failure to mention one of the most significant causes of disease – destitution, failed to take notice of others who had previously taken care to point this out.⁹ Concerns for the welfare of the populous did not grow out of the state’s desire to provide a better life for the poor, it grew out of the need to protect the middle classes from the effects of the new awareness that disease was carried by other means than foul air.¹⁰ Of course, workers of prime working age who were struck down by disease was detrimental to the growing economy. Nearly twenty years later it was still considered the cause of fever when referring to overcrowding of Irish vagrants in common lodging houses, and other such places, ‘especially those rooms crowded by Irish vagrants where the atmosphere habitually breathed would provide fever, in a stranger to them, within a few hours’.¹¹ The provision of flowing water and sewers was a concept of living that Chadwick could visualize but it needed men like Rawlinson, a civil engineer by profession, to find a way to realise it.

In his work, he took pains to make reference to the Irish as those who suffered in the midst of this ‘consequence’. He did refer to the English but excluded them from his concluding remarks, which inferred they did not suffer to the same degree nor were they part of the problem of the high mortality rate. His criticism of the local authorities, and the way in which the civic amenities were administered, was reported in detail in the local newspaper and considered exceedingly unwelcome in Whitehaven where the mortality rate was known to range between 28.13 per 1000 and 32.75 per 1000 for the years 1841-1848.¹² Hamlin

⁸ James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the working classes employed in the cotton manufacture in Manchester* (Manchester, 1832, repr.1969).

⁹ Christopher Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice in the age of Chadwick* (Cambridge 1998), p.109.

¹⁰ David Roberts, *Paternalism in early Victorian England* (New York, 1979), pp.7-8.

¹¹ *Carlisle Journal*, 21 June 1850.

¹² Rawlinson, *A Report of the General Board of Health*, p.9; *Carlisle Patriot*, 24 November 1849.

refers to similar indignant reactions by other towns faced with the inspectors' reports on the habitation of the poor (particularly Irish); for example, the attitude in Macclesfield, where the mortality rate was twenty-nine per thousand and 'talk of disease was couched in terms of accusations. The epidemiological question, *where the disease came from*, was less important than, *whose fault it was*'.¹³ A committee of local practitioners tried to convince one inspector (Smith) that 'the town was really healthy'.¹⁴ Similarly in Merthyr, in Wales, the high mortality rate was claimed to be 'caused by lack of meat'.¹⁵ It seems there was no shortage of 'expert opinion' from the beadles of the towns on a matter which called for medical and engineering expertise, even before possible solutions had been offered by the institutions which had some knowledge of the difficulties faced by these towns. Witnesses abounded in their efforts to provide opinion. Overcrowding of the grave yard was cited as a possible cause of health problems but a Mr. Spencer spoke up to discount this issue and stated that 'the yard was crowded with graves but he had had no ill effect during the thirty-three years he had lived in front of it'.¹⁶ One of the Guardians of Whitehaven was of the opinion 'that disease had arisen more from want of proper food and clothing than from the want of sewerage and conveniences and excess fever arose from the increase in the population'.¹⁷ Despite these protestations Rawlinson made it clear that he would 'not exclude the enquiry from wretchedness where it was found to exist, especially in the courts and cellars'. The trustees acceded to this part of his brief but insisted that the residents in streets, filthy and malodorous 'felt no inconvenience'.

By 1851 the urban areas of the far north contained around 50% of the population of the entire region. A significant number of the inhabitants were Irish and Scots migrants and were recorded as numbering 9,872 (5.05%) in Cumberland and 7,448 (3.81%) in Northumberland, more than any other county except the engine room of the first industrial revolution, Lancashire.¹⁸ Whilst acknowledging that immigration during the famine period contributed substantially to the labour supply, it accounted for less than a third of the increase. Before the 1840s and in the 1850s and 1860s there was a roughly balanced immigrant number compared with those Britons who went abroad.¹⁹ As an identifiable ethnic group many of the Irish would have entered an environment radically different from

¹³ C. Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice*, pp.295-6.

¹⁴ Thomas Southwood Smith, Macclesfield, 1849, 68-9, *Statements and Observations in Relation to the Report of William Lee C. E. to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the City of Ely* (Ely, 1850).

¹⁵ C. Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice*, p.296.

¹⁶ *Carlisle Patriot*, 24 November 1849.

¹⁷ *Carlisle Patriot*, 24 November 1849.

¹⁸ J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, *The Lakes Counties*, Table 4.3, p.86.

¹⁹ E. H. Hunt, *British Labour History, 1815-1914* (London, 1981), p.34.

their own – urban crowding rather than rural space.²⁰ This is not to say there was no poverty in English rural areas, far from it. It was the primitive state of the Northumberland dwellings that shocked James Caird, a contemporary writer in the mid-nineteenth century, when he complained of pigs and cows living under the same roof as the labourers in much the same way as Irish rural dwellings were occupied.²¹ The livelihoods for those in such poverty were cyclical in manufacturing and seasonal in agricultural work, an important determinant even in periods of economic prosperity. In a good season there was a bare sufficiency of income. In a bad season, or period of economic recession, the numbers affected by hardship in the winter months could rise significantly. By the beginning of June gangs of mowers were moving around the country with the hay-makers following in their wake. As the summer months progressed there would be fewer numbers in the workhouse and in the towns, but as the autumn weather set in and the agricultural season came to an end the movement was reversed and the labouring masses drifted back into the towns and stayed wherever they could find accommodation according to their means. Tramps, vagrants, destitute made their way to the workhouses or the common lodging houses.²² ‘All over England’, wrote an observer in 1861, ‘a characteristic migration sets in ...tens and hundreds of thousands...driven by necessity...swarm into the towns’.²³ This was characterized by the movement of summer to winter trades, outdoor to indoor jobs. This needs to be noted when assessing employment of the working classes from census data. The trade or form of employment logged by the enumerator at the time could have been completely different if the census had been taken two months later. Of course, the problem was that the anti-charity lobby was convinced, perhaps with some justification, that the ‘warm and cosy’ features of the charity workers was the reason for the large influx of tramps, vagrants, and all other undesirables to migrate into the town in the colder months of the year.

North of the border almost a quarter of the 60,000 inhabitants in Paisley, near Glasgow, were on charity in 1841-2. The implications of this must have motivated poor law reformers such as Edwin Chadwick as they saw more and more migrants moving south from both the west and east of Scotland into the far north counties. When a Commission was set up in Scotland in 1843 to make ‘a diligent and full enquiry’ into the Scottish Poor Law

²⁰ C. Galley, *The demography of Early Modern towns, York in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Liverpool, 1994), p.27.

²¹ James Caird, *English Agriculture in the 1850-51* (1852), p.389.

²² Trade Tramps, *Leisure Hour* (1868), p.358, in Dyos and Wolff, (eds.), *The Victorian City, Images and Realities* (London, 1973).

²³ *London City Mission Magazine*, 2 December 1861.

system, witnesses claimed the allowances to the impotent were in general insufficient.²⁴ By 1845 the state had taken over the responsibility for the administration of relief, but little had changed from the localised system that preceded this legislation. According to Michael Lynch, 'The real difference was that, although the system was still a local rather than a national one, the debate of its workings now went on in a wider forum'.²⁵ The benefits of this were brought to bear as severe shortages, large scale evictions, and sheep clearances in the Highlands contributed to the causes of destitution, which made migration an economic necessity.²⁶ Figures suggest that in the order of 150,000 people were seriously at risk and famine relief measures, through benevolent societies in the lowlands under the influence of government officials, were put into effect in 1846.²⁷ This exerted pressure on the far north from the Scots side of the border as migrants sought to escape the economic circumstances driving them into destitution.

The threat of destitution came in various guises but attached to them was the influence of religion on the lives of the migrant poor. Whilst acknowledging that Christianity in all its forms had some importance for many migrants, and the extent to which the practice of that religion was exercised is well known through census data, its spiritual significance is difficult to grasp. Sectarianism, the religious divide between Catholic and Protestant, was intensified by both the famine and the news of a grant made to the Roman Catholic seminary in Maynooth in Ireland in 1845, which raised the ire of those who saw the Catholic church, especially the Irish Catholic church, as a threat to the established Church of England.²⁸ More importantly for the poor however, was the provision of the function that the priests provided in the communities around the churches which sprang up in the towns and villages across the region. This was seen as a fundamental part of the support network that provided for many migrants.²⁹ The drift of Irish paupers into the poorer parts of the towns gave the Catholic Church an entirely new task: the care of thousands of souls where there had been only hundreds before, and the popular need for an urban ministry in the English landscape of genteel Catholicism.³⁰ For the protestant Irish migrants an alternative form of support came through the Orange movement which had grown up in Armagh in 1795 as an umbrella for Ulster Protestantism as a distinctively working-class and still largely Ulster Irish movement. By the 1850s the new wave of Ulster migrants into the west of Britain was no

²⁴ 1844, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law in Scotland*, vol. 20, xvi.

²⁵ Michael Lynch, *Scotland, A new history* (London, 2006), p.393.

²⁶ T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland famine* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.19.

²⁷ T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland famine*, p.111.

²⁸ T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland famine* p.395.

²⁹ D. M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain* (London, 1999), p.82.

³⁰ Sheridan Gilley, in H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, *The Victorian City, Images and realities, Volume 2* (London, 1973), p.837.

longer moving into the weaving factories and the mines but into the more skilled jobs offered in the ship-building industry on the Clyde.³¹

For the poorest in society, the growth of political awareness was slow in coming. It was after the Great Famine, that the real growth of nationalism in the shape of Fenianism began to show itself. It is possible to argue that this form of political activism was seen as a sign of ingratitude by the Irish for all that the English had done for them in their time of trouble, adding to the already negative attitudes that were endemic and dangerous features of British cultural life.³² No doubt this caused some to withdraw their support for those they saw as in need of aid, whether charitable or state funded. Nevertheless, Irish Catholics in Britain, with considerable strength in the far north, were estimated to be in the region of 500,000-750,000 by the 1850s and the Catholic Church in Britain was, in large measure, an Irish church firmly established in the far north.³³

5 (ii) *Housing and the ghetto debate*

‘Until quite recently the segregation of the Irish, both culturally and residentially, was a commonplace of historical literature, but is now under attack as a crude generalisation, which has created only a partial picture of the Irish as a group. A view of the Irish as inhabiting ghettos has been condemned as accepting unquestioningly the ideologies underpinning mid-nineteenth-century commentary’.³⁴ The first priority for newly arrived migrants would have been to find cheap housing close to their potential employers. Undoubtedly there would have been some benefits in having fellow countrymen living alongside and nearby in the same area of the town, but the attraction of the cheapest form of housing was paramount.³⁵ W. Lowe, maintained that it was large numbers of disparate famine migrants that gave the Irish community a one-dimensional and homogenously-impooverished appearance.³⁶ Quite what he meant by ‘one-dimensional community’ is not clear but what is clear was that there were evidently significant numbers of Irish in certain

³¹ T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland famine*, p.395.

³² MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain* p.187.

³³ John A. Burnett and Kyle Hughes, D. M. MacRaild, Malcolm Smith, ‘Scottish Migrants in the Northern ‘Irish Sea Industrial Zone’, 1841-1911: Preliminary Patterns and Perspectives’, *Northern History*, XLIV, (2012), pp. 77-97. [See also: J.A. Burnett, ‘Hail Brither Scots O’ Coaly Tyne: networking and identity among Scottish Migrants in the north east of England, c. 1860–2000’, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 25:1 (2007), 1–21; A. Burnett and D. M. MacRaild, ‘The Irish and Scots on Tyneside’, in *Northumbria: History and Identity* 547–2000, (ed.), R. Colls (Chichester, 2007), pp. 178–93; A. McCarthy, ‘National Identities and Twentieth-Century Scottish Migrants in England’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 128 (2005), 171–82].

³⁴ Paul O’Leary, *Immigration and Integration, The Irish in Wales 1798-1922*, p.9.

³⁵ W. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire* (New York, 1989), p.68-9; Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians, Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge MA, 1973), p.41.

³⁶ W. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire*, p.69.

neighbourhoods, which the authorities perceived as a problem. His concept of the ghetto as residential distinctiveness to the point of segregation, set apart from other groups in sub-standard, multiple-occupancy housing in high density areas and unskilled employment, followed the traditional interpretation of the concept. Stephan Thernstrom found a 'highly transient' working class population in Boston in his American research that consisted of families that left a 'single faint imprint' on the census schedule, which then vanished completely.³⁷ It was this fluidity that undermined the snapshot nature of the census. Almost anything could have happened in the interim period with families moving in and out of houses as their circumstances changed. All that can be affirmed with some certainty is that the properties in the areas of lowest rent attracted the poorest in society of which the Irish were disproportionately represented. Patterns of fluidity are therefore hard to define.

Today it is difficult to capture just what it was like for the poor, particularly in the urban areas. The dirt and disease; state of clothing; lack of clean water; quality of food (especially meat); lack of human waste disposal; child mortality; numbers of persons of all ages who lived in cramped conditions in small houses; were all quite normal.³⁸ The Irish poor had limited options available to them on arrival at their destination port. Few could afford to rent a house as an independent person or family. For those who had friends or family already established in the town there was the potential to live as a lodger. For those with minimum money and no connections the common lodging houses were available in most towns. In this study, Whitehaven, as an important port of arrival for immigrants from Ireland, provided the prospect of employment and accommodation. How the town and nearby villages served to meet this need will be explored together with the part Rawlinson played in the drama of life in the densely populated houses in the town. As a last resort, for those migrants without any support network and no money, it was the workhouse and public relief. To fall under the care of the local authorities was to risk having to endure the workhouse regime and was likely to result in removal to Ireland. Of course, there was always the option of 'sleeping rough' in barns, sheds or the open air but this immediately branded the individual as a vagrant, liable to arrest and a potential sentence of hard labour, as detailed in chapter three. These were the hazards that the Irish poor faced in the lowest order of the working population and largely employed in the low-waged jobs and a fundamental reason why they were almost always found in the worst housing conditions. According to several witnesses to the Select Committees, including Mr. Gaskell a surgeon of the Stockport Infirmary, this 'lowest order' of housing was the lodging house and:

³⁷ S. Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians*, p.41.

³⁸ F. B. Smith, *People's Health 1830-1910* (London, 1979), p. xx.

the most favoured place to live for the Irish men who are not in the habit of living in a separate house but reside in a lodging house...it appears to me that there should be some interference of the law to prevent the Irish crowding together in such places.³⁹

With a long history of migration, the Irish often had the advantage of being able to make contact with friends or family members who had already made the shift to England, particularly to those coastal regions forming the hinterland of the arrival port. With their high level of cultural coherence, generated within and outside of their homeland, connections in their new environment were readily made but could be construed as a wilful desire to be segregated from the host population. The debate regarding the strength of this interpretation is inconclusive but the main factor determining choice of housing was largely socio-economic, notwithstanding the strength of cultural ties. As earlier contributors to this debate of the mid-twentieth century, J. M. Werly and E. P. Thompson drew opposite conclusions in their assessment of Irish segments of the population. Thompson, commenting on the Irish generally, judged that 'If they were segregated in some towns, the Irish were never pressed back into ghettos.'⁴⁰ Werly, writing about the poorest parts of Manchester, found that the Irish did live within two clearly delineated ghettos, separated geographically from English living quarters and culturally apart in terms of their religion and employment. The difficulty with Werly's analysis is the defined nature of the ghetto. For him the term meant black smoke, polluted rivers, pig sties and open sewers with every other form of filth and was heavily reliant on Kay's and Lewis's reports which dripped with the prejudice of the 'migrant problem'. He also relied on the occasional reference to medical officers' evidence such as John Robertson, surgeon of the Manchester lying-in hospital, who contended that, 'the majority of Manchester's cellar dwellings, I incline to think, are inhabited by Irish'.⁴¹ Perhaps even more importantly for this discussion, was a firm reliance on contemporary literature such as government reports, the novels of Dickens and Gaskell and the accounts of Marx and Engels, which focused on Irish housing conditions and life experience, to the exclusion of the English living in the same localities in similar circumstances. This approach exacerbated the prejudicial elements of the 'Irish difference' rather than providing useful comparisons. They did point however to the strongest element of the institutional ghetto, the catholic church and the Irish reliance on the place that the church and its leaders had in their lives as an alien community in the poverty-stricken world of the working class.

³⁹ 1835 (40), *Report of the Select Committee on the state of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*, Appendix G, p.87.

⁴⁰ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p.480.

⁴¹ J. M. Werly, 'The Irish in Manchester', *Irish Historical Studies*, 18, 71 (1973), p.345.

Several residential surveys have been carried out in a bid to explain the occupational characteristics of ethnic groups in towns and their spatial occupation. Charles Richardson conducted a study of the Irish community in Victorian Bradford and described the places they resided in as 'the worst areas of British cities'.⁴² What he did not do was to make any comparisons with the English living alongside them. He labelled the areas where Irish lived as 'Irish areas or streets' without any assessment of the proportion of the population in those particular streets. The conclusion that these areas or streets were 'Irish' simply because they housed numbers of Irish residents is not convincing. Lowe follows this argument to conclude that the Irish were residentially distinct to the point of segregation, but acknowledged that Liverpool and other Lancashire towns rarely contained streets inhabited by more than half of Irish households and residence patterns were increasingly incidental.⁴³ Pooley's assessment of the Irish in Liverpool concluded that, where a migrant group combined an unbalanced population with strong cultural coherence, then segregation was most severe and a traditional migrant ghetto might form.⁴⁴ This rather loose usage of the term ghetto confuses the concept instead of clarifying it. Mervyn Busteed in his analysis introduced the term 'clustering', of homes, to describe the 'defensive mechanism' of the migrant, a means of coping with an alien environment and the latent sometimes overt hostility encountered. He posits 'clustering' by the Irish and their identity and solidarity as 'Irish Catholics,' in which ties and kinship were the basic fabric of social life and being'.⁴⁵ In support of this view Davis writes: 'Native loyalties and kinship ties explain this huddling together of migrants which was often perceived by the host community to represent a greater presence than was actually the case'.⁴⁶

That some Irish migrants did live in *some* of the most squalid conditions before and after the famine migration is generally acknowledged, but it was from this that the image of

⁴² C. Richardson, 'The Irish in Victorian Bradford', *The Bradford Antiquary*, v.11 (1971), p.316; [There are a large number of studies of the Irish in urban areas: see also: Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration, The Irish in Wales, 1798-1922* (Cardiff, 2000); Colin Pooley, 'Segregation or Integration?'; Francis Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice, A Study of Irish Immigrants in York, 1840-1875* (Cork, 1982); L. H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979); J.D. Papworth, 'The Irish in Liverpool, 1835-7, 'Family Structure and Residential Mobility', Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1982; C.G. Pooley, 'Migration, Mobility and Residential Areas in Nineteenth-Century Liverpool', Ph.D. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1978 and 'The Residential Segregation of Migrant Communities in Mid-Victorian Liverpool', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol.2, 1977; John Herson, 'Irish migration and settlement in Victorian England, a small-town perspective, in Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in Britain*, pp.138-86; Alan O'Day (ed.), *A survey of the Irish in England, 1872* (London, 1990)].

⁴³ W. J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire* (New York, 1989), p.69.

⁴⁴ Colin G. Pooley, 'Segregation or Integration? The residential experience of the Irish in Mid-Victorian Britain, in Swift and Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Britain, 1185-1939* (London, 1989)1977, p.378.

⁴⁵ Mervyn Busteed, 'Little Islands of Erin: Irish Settlement and identity in mid-nineteenth century Manchester', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 1999, 18:2-3, p.111.

⁴⁶ Graham Davis: *The Irish in Britain, 1813-1914* (Dublin, 1991), p.31.

the ‘ghetto-Irish’ emerged and with it ‘a package of fears amongst the host community’.⁴⁷ These fears, in part generated by the rising tide of Irish immigration at a time of uncontrolled urban expansion, generated statements such as ‘the product of moral degeneracy led inexorably to the ‘contagion’ of Irish migrants’.⁴⁸ Much of this can be traced back to the influential work of Kay who represented early Victorian fears of an urban crisis as a problem of moral contagion with all the ill-considered prejudice that came naturally in the style of the nineteenth-century writer. In Hamlin’s view Chadwick stoked the mood of fear amongst the influential section of the public in order to push his ‘sewer agenda’ through rather than link poverty with disease.⁴⁹ However, unlike Lewis’ support of Kay’s contentions, Lyon Playfair, writing on the same topic thirteen years later, made a devastating refutation of Kay by emphasising the structural nature of housing rather than focusing on the occupants of the dwellings.⁵⁰ This stands in stark contrast to other contemporary views and argues that Irish immigration was not as fearful a problem as many thought. Both Lowe and Pooley struck an intellectual compromise in their socio-economic studies when they argued that dense concentrations of settlement did occur amongst the unskilled Irish but they were never segregated from the unskilled English, Welsh or Scots.⁵¹

Reference to the size of Irish families as the reason for their poverty took little account of the fact that households often included more than one family. However, this aspect of habitation manifested itself, the term ‘ghetto’ had by this time developed as a socially divisive term to separate a socially and economically deprived marginalised minority, a criterion yet to be identified with the Irish in the far north. O’Leary concurs with this conclusion and suggested that ‘there were no predominantly Irish districts, just areas where Irish live with English and others’, ‘to a greater or lesser degree the Irish and Welsh shared streets and neighbourhoods’.⁵² The phrase, ‘where Irish live’ leads the debate into the poorest areas of Whitehaven and the surrounding villages where lodging houses were an accepted house-type, occupied by multiple households of English, Irish and Scots.

⁴⁷ Graham Davis, *The Irish in Britain*, p.59.

⁴⁸ J. P. Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes employed in the cotton manufacture in Manchester* (Manchester, 1832, repr. 1969).

⁴⁹ C. Hamlin (2000), p.214.

⁵⁰ Lyon Playfair, *Supplement to the Report on the Sanitary Condition of Large Towns in Lancashire 1845, Appendix to the second report to the Commission*.

⁵¹ Colin Pooley, ‘Segregation or Integration?’ (London, 1989), pp.106-8; [For comparisons of the Irish-born in 1851 and 1871, see Pooley, in Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in Britain*, tables 2.1 and 2.2, pp. 66–67; Paul O’Leary, *Immigration and Integration, The Irish in Wales, 1798-1922* (Cardiff, 2000), pp.116-119].

⁵² O’Leary, *Immigration and Integration* (2000), p.128.

5 (iii) *Policing the lodging house phenomenon*

Setting aside those who could afford to rent a house independently, the two remaining housing options for the poor (apart from the workhouse) were either to pay as a lodger with an established family or the common lodging house. This was the cheapest place that provided shelter for a night or longer: a nocturnal haven for the wandering mass of vagrants, tramps, hawkers and travelling labourers. There were few towns across the country without this shelter facility and London, Liverpool and Manchester with their sprawl of urban housing were well known as having great numbers.⁵³ The definition of the ‘common lodging house’ was conceived by the legislators to mean ‘that class of house in which persons of the poorer classes are received for short periods and who, although strangers to one another, are allowed to inhabit one common room’.⁵⁴ If any regulation was to be enforced, it was of course essential to ensure that the agencies knew what they were dealing with. Any room in which there were lodged more than the members of one family came within this interpretation.⁵⁵ Common lodging houses, like the casual ward in the workhouse, were a major concern for the ‘respectable classes’. They were seen to be exceedingly undesirable places as ‘common lodging houses foster these seed-plots of mendacity and vagabondage’⁵⁶. This perception led to some difficulty in defining their use, and inevitably their control, which depended to a large extent upon the local agencies and how they saw the buildings and their occupants. Ian Taylor in his enumeration used figures of more than ten persons to describe a habitation as a lodging house which may contain lodgers, boarders, immigrants or vagrants which he designated as quasi-institutional. But this is no more than a convenient unit of measurement.⁵⁷

The driving force behind the concern about the common lodging houses came from a number of sources. First, the Guardians of the union district had a preference to use them in lieu of the workhouse, mainly because they were more economic, a factor discussed in Chapter 3. Secondly, the public’s need to maintain a ‘clean town policy’, free from the vagrant nuisance, and controlled by the adoption of a clearly monitored process. If vagrants had a few pence they generally preferred the common lodging house option, often sanctioned and ‘ticketed’ at no charge by the appointed overseer, rather than a night in the workhouse

⁵³ Dyos and Wolff, (eds.), *The Victorian City, Images and Realities* (London, 1973), p.127.

⁵⁴ 1852-53 (237), *Common Lodging House Act. Report made to the Secretary of State for the Home Department*.

⁵⁵ J. S. Taylor, *Poverty, migration and settlement in the industrial revolution: sojourners narratives* (Paolo Alto, 1989), p.116.

⁵⁶ Alsager Hay-Hill, *Vagrancy: The Relations of Country Districts to Great Town* (London, 1881), p.5.

⁵⁷ J. S. Taylor, *Poverty, migration and settlement*, p.116.

casual ward. Thirdly, the police, as acting relieving officers in many union districts, were required by the Guardians to maintain some degree of regulation and control.

Policing the system to contain and control the poor and destitute could only be managed provided the numbers did not escalate beyond the level of the available accommodation. Thus, it was that, by the 1840s, the lodging house had become a thriving business for many landlords. The guaranteed income from the 'vagrant ticket', issued by the relieving officer appointed by the Guardians or police officers, provided accommodation for a night or two, sometimes longer, on a low rate but on a regular basis. The difficulty for the authorities was to regulate these premises in a legal manner and maintain a standard of cleanliness which would avoid the spreading of infectious diseases. By 1848 the Cockermouth Poor Law Union had adopted the option of police supervision and a similar system was recommended to be used in Whitehaven where vagrancy 'entirely owes its existence to the most thoughtless members of the community who direct their sympathies into the wrong channel'.⁵⁸ This view was not uncommon amongst those who were determined to stamp out charitable giving on the grounds that such charity thwarted the police in their efforts to keep an eye on vagrants in the places designated by the authorities. Some degree of regulation of the building, and the facilities provided, was maintained by utilising the Common Lodging Houses Act 1851. This was reinforced by the Common Lodging Houses Byelaws at a local level which enabled the authorities to monitor, regulate and police the premises. They also stipulated the requirements with regard to sanitary and health arrangements and inspection access by the guardians.⁵⁹ A feature that surely caused great concern for the authorities, prior to the police regulation, was the culture that inmates remained anonymous. They were admitted without giving their names on payment of the fee.⁶⁰ Surprisingly there was a conspicuous absence of any reference to the Irish and Scots poor in the Board of Guardians' minutes around this period. This suggested a low level of concern about the habits of Irish migrants in contrast to the opinions in the press, which generally worked hard to generate a sense of alarm in their readers. No assumptions can be made that the Guardians and the authorities were influenced by such material, whatever views were expressed. However, the housing stock and the lodging house phenomenon in Whitehaven and Cleator Moor provided an interesting urban environment from which to extract some perception of life on the margins of society.

⁵⁸ TNA, MH13/1626, *Correspondence from Clerk to Cockermouth Guardians to Poor Law Board*, 13 July 1848, Reported in *Whitehaven Herald*, 12 May 1848; 1847-48 (987) *Reports and Communications on Vagrancy*, p.53.

⁵⁹ CRO, Whitehaven, SCONS/5/2/2, *Penrith Borough Council, Common Lodging House Byelaws, 1857*.

⁶⁰ E. Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations: A History of the Working-class Housing 1780-1918* (London, 1974), pp. 241-46, 249.

5 (iv) *Living on the margins in Cleator and Cleator Moor*

West Cumberland, as an 'industrial heartland' of the far north, is an ideal place for the historian to start if the history of this region is to be uncovered. Industry in this part of the region had become well-established by the mid-nineteenth century, based on the numerous coal pits sunk and operational, as well as the haematite-rich iron ore mines which were essential to the new steel production process. Whitehaven, as a principal port on the west coast, provided a passenger service terminal for the Irish Sea crossing as well as acting as a commercial hub for the iron and coal trade and, perhaps most importantly for the period of this study, a dis-embarkation point for Irish migrants. It was Whitehaven and its industrial hinterland that attracted them with the hope and prospect of a better life. To meet the growing demand for labour, housing in Whitehaven and the surrounding mining villages was stretched far beyond its capacity. To understand what impact this had on the population, the hypothesis that 'the Irish and Scots migrants as specific ethnic groups created and lived in ghettos' will be tested. Whitehaven and Cleator Moor, as locations where Irish and Scots migrants had settled over previous decades, provides rich material for analysis of this assertion. The haematite-rich ore mines of Cleator, just three miles inland from Whitehaven where numbers of Irish men had made their homes since 1760, contained a few good houses, about eighty cottages occupied by the workmen and employed at the two large iron forges and a flax mill' in 1829.⁶¹ Today the fields around Cleator Moor are spotted with the grassed over mounds of slag heaps and spoil from the excavations, which provides evidence of the local English and Scottish entrepreneurs who had exploited this underground resource since the first mine opened in 1802. There was good money to be made here if you were fortunate enough to find employment. Eighteen to twenty-five shillings per week was the rate in 1831 for a 'hewer' at the coal face and the renowned Irish physique was ideally suited to this demanding manual labour. One well-known mine owner in the region was John Christian Curwen, recorded in the mining business as a wealthy land-owner, he had royal assent to the mineral rights on the land under his ownership. In 1831 his Chief Colliery Agent J. Peile made it clear to the shareholders that 'Our men have no real cause for complaint, their greatest evil is such a disposition for Idleness and Disinclination to Work, and their present poverty is our security'.⁶²

⁶¹ Parson and White, *History, Directory and Gazetteer of Cumberland and Westmoreland, 1829* (Cumbria, 1829, repr.1976), p.198.

⁶² CRO, D/LONS/W, Peile reports and papers 31 Jan 1831, in Oliver Wood, *West Cumberland Coal 1600-1982/3* (Kendal, 1988), p.137.

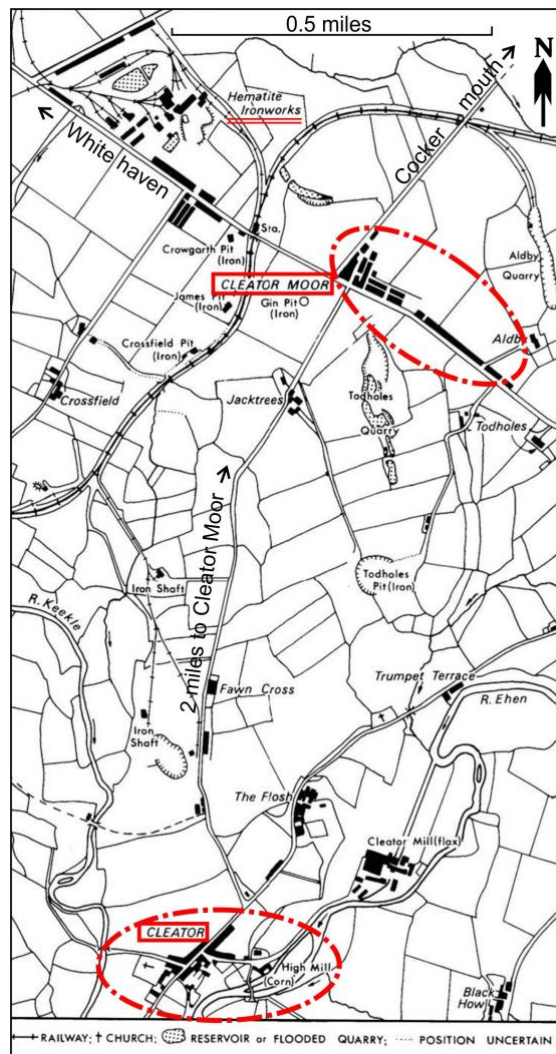


Figure 5.1: Mine workings, Cleator and Cleator Moor, Cumberland.⁶³

This comment broke new ground in its forthright utilitarian approach to the state of the labouring class by overtly claiming that the maintenance of the poor in a state of poverty guaranteed the land and mine-owning class their security and their prosperity. Ten years later the 1841 Cleator Moor census recorded 94 Irish (12% of the population), most of whom lived in the Church Lane/Cleator Street area; and 30 Scots (4% of the population), the vast majority being employed under the control of the Curwen enterprise in 1841 (Table 5.1).

Cleator population: Place of Birth for all Ages 1841										
	Born in or County England		Natives of Scotland		Natives of Ireland		Others		Total Population	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	288	345	18	12	38	56	1	5	349	414
Totals	633		30 (4%)		94 (12%)		6 (<1%)		763	

Table 5.1: Cleator population birth places, 1841⁶⁴

⁶³ CRO, Ordnance Survey, Six Inch Series, 1863, lxvii.

⁶⁴ *Census England and Wales, Enumerators' Books*, 1841, HO107, Registrar's District of Egremont.

Despite the economic contraction of much of the rest of the country the population of Cleator had grown at a remarkable pace after the down-turn experienced when the Flax Mill closed (Table 5.2).

Year	Population	Increase (%)	Comments
1801	363		
1811	571	57	
1821	818	43	
1831	487		Closure of flax mill, reopened in 1837-8 ⁶⁵
1841	763	57	
1851	1779	133	Surge through the 1840s despite the recession
1861	3995	125	Irish c.60% of population
1871	7061	77	

Table 5.2: Population growth of Cleator, 1801-1871⁶⁶

Prosperity in this village, only a few miles from the arrival port of the Irish famine victims, had that ‘pull factor’ for those who may have needed to beg their way into a job or find the rent for lodging. Generally, for the labour force, the 1840s were a time of political and economic tension but for west Cumberland the expansion of the railway network, and the demand for coal to feed the iron furnaces made employment for the low-skilled Irish labourer available. This growth was not however without its concerns for the Poor Law Guardians in Whitehaven, who were responsible for the welfare of the population throughout the district. Economic boom could easily turn into financial collapse with the ratepayer liable to foot the bill for a slump in the fortunes of the mining and steel companies. The question arises, when such downturns occurred, how did the migrant Irish and Scots who became destitute, sick or aged, survive?

5 (v) *The growing housing crisis*

Migrants anxious to find accommodation at minimal cost were crowding into small houses of the two-up two-down or back-to-back type, where they may have had relatives or friends already established in the town who were prepared to accommodate them. They found houses like these in Cleator which were not uncommon in poorer districts of many

⁶⁵ J. D. Marshall, ‘Cleator and Cleator Moor: Some aspects of their Social and urban Development in the mid-19th Century’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 78 (1978), pp.163-175.

⁶⁶ J. D. Marshall, ‘Cleator and Cleator Moor’, p.25 (part); CRO, England and Wales census data reports.

towns and villages. Such houses were poorly constructed, damp and poorly ventilated and without sewer connections. All the conditions recognised as those likely to give rise to disease in its various forms. Three houses in Cleator Moor with exceptionally high occupancy levels provided good examples of how blame was allocated, not without justification, for health problems in the town (Table 5.3). At No.2 Church Lane there were twelve inhabitants: the head of household and his wife and their two daughters and eight lodgers. At No. 4 Church Lane, there was a different household structure of seventeen inhabitants: the head of the household was an Irish woman with seven children. The eldest child was fifteen years of age and the youngest five months. All the children were recorded as having been born in the county, indicating that the parents had been resident in the country for at least fifteen years, unless the parents of the children had a number of children from a previous marriage. In addition, there was a single Irish woman with her four children (Aged 14, 12, 8 and 5 years), all of whom were born in the county, and four lodgers. At No. 4 Cleator Street there were fifteen inhabitants: an Irish couple with two children (the eldest being four years), having settlement by birth, and eleven lodgers who were Irish and English together with their children. These three examples demonstrate that ‘overcrowding’ in houses in Cleator Moor was not simply an Irish problem. In one house English lodgers took advantage of the facility offered by an Irish household to provide them with bed and board; in another, English and Irish lodgers lived in an Irish household; and in another Irish and English families lived in an Irish household.

Example 1							
House	Head of Household, Spouse	No. Children of Head Household	of of	Additional Adults as Lodgers		Additional Children [15 years] of Lodgers	
No.2 Church Lane		M	F	M	F	M	F
	James Rooney (I)	-	2 (I)	2 (I)	4 (I)	-	1 (E)
	Susana Rooney (I)				1 (E)		
		Total number of inhabitants = 12					
Example 2							
No. 4 Church Lane		M	F	M	F	M	F
	Mary McGinley (I)	3 (E)	4 (E)	1 (E)	1 (E), 2 (I)	2 (E)	2 (E), 1 (I)
		Total number of inhabitants = 17					
Example 3							
No. 4 Cleator Street		M	F	M	F	M	F
	James Sawrey (I)	1 (E)	1 (E)	4 (I)	4 (I)	3 (I)	
	Margaret Sawrey (I)				1 (E)		
		Total number of inhabitants = 15					

Table 5.3: Sample of high occupancy housing in Cleator.⁶⁷

There are other examples in the same street of this complex permutation of Irish, English, Scots, single, married, widowed, infants and elderly, who all lived together in the same house. The word ‘crowded’ takes on a different meaning here to today’s definition when six or seven individuals in a small house of the size referred to above would be thought to be crowded. In the nineteenth century large families, were the norm. Kay’s reference to the Irish character was, when evidence such as this is considered, a scapegoating of the Irish in order to cover up the lack of constructive management of a socio-economic problem. O’Leary followed this argument through as outlined earlier in the chapter. Furthermore, it was a time when acknowledgement of the problem and its implications for a healthy workforce were beginning to filter through to government and from there to the local communities. In 1847 what appeared to be the most dire living conditions were seen as the problem of those who lived in such circumstances rather than a structural problem for the authorities. It was the threat of disease spreading across the workforce; the cost of

⁶⁷ *Census England and Wales, 1841, Enumerator’s Books, HO 107*

intervention to arrest this contagion and the risk of infection of the growing middle class and landowning gentry that drove the demand for authoritative action, not the state of the poor.

Taking a broader sample of housing across the population of Cleator, the 1851 census material provides a far richer analysis of residents in the area. This census included column descriptions such as, ‘condition’ (*marital or familial status*), ‘relationship to the head of household’ and sometimes more information on ‘where born’ rather than simply ‘in county’. The census enumerator, presumably for convenience of recording, divided the area into two parts: one ‘to the east side of the publick road containing the east side of the village of Cleator’, which amounted to approximately one third of the inhabitants; and the other ‘to the west of the village of Cleator’ containing the other two-thirds. English, Irish-born and Scots-born inhabitants lived in 102 houses on the east side of Cleator where the new iron works increased the demand for labour (Table 5.4).

	No. of Houses	Ave no. of persons/house	English	Irish	Scots	Total
Cleator Village (East side)	55	5.1	262	20 (7%)	5	287
Outlying Houses	33	5.5	175	5 (3%)	1	181
New Works	14	8.1	58	50 (45%)	3	111
Totals	102	5.7	495	75 (13%)	9 (1.5%)	579

Table 5.4: House occupancy levels, east side of Cleator and environs.⁶⁸

In 1851 there were 579 inhabitants made up of 75 Irish (13%), nine Scots (1.5%) and 495 English-born. In the New Works cluster of houses 45% of the inhabitants were Irish, far higher than in the other two areas on this side of the town. Four dwellings were occupied by twelve or more inhabitants of which 31 out of the 40 inhabitants (75%) were Irish. With the highest occupancy level in this cluster of houses, where the average occupancy level was 8.1 persons per house, it was not hard to imagine how the Irish were branded as those who lived ‘differently’. The press and the authorities were prone to view this as a threat to the morality of those young women who lived in shared rooms with workmen rather than the health problems that would arise in damp, poorly ventilated, insanitary houses.⁶⁹ On the west side of Cleator the residential area was again split roughly into three areas: outlying dwellings, Cleator Moor and Cleator village a total of 1269 inhabitants who occupied 154 houses (Table 5.5).

⁶⁸ *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators’ Books*, HO 107.

⁶⁹ *Carlisle Patriot*, 24 November 1849.

	No. of Houses	Ave. no. of persons/house	English	Iris	Scot	Total
Cleator Village (West side)	42	11.0	173	283 (61%)	5 (1%)	461
Outlying Houses	56	6.8	310	42 (11%)	29 (8%)	381
Cleator Moor	56	7.5	242	155 (37%)	30 (7%)	427
Totals	154	(8.0 Ave.)	725	480 (38% Ave.)	64 (5% Ave.)	1269

Table 5.5: House occupancy levels, west side of Cleator Village, Cleator Moor and outlying houses.⁷⁰

Even when taking into account the outlying houses such as farms and small clusters of cottages traditionally inhabited by local people, the Irish-born represented 36% of the population with only a small number of Scots-born across the parish. Occupancy levels of Irish were compared to the English to verify the incidence of any dominant group and the following conclusions emerge:

Cleator village (west side)

- (a) Irish: 14.8 persons per house (19 houses with 283 occupants)
- (b) English: 8.7 persons per house (20 houses with 173 occupants)

Cleator Moor

- (c) Irish: 9.1 persons per house (17 houses with 155 occupants)
- (d) English 6.7 persons per house (36 houses with 242 occupants)

From these figures, the Irish in Cleator Village (a) averaged 14.8 persons per house and lived in what were clearly the most densely populated houses. The English in Cleator Village (b) and the Irish in Cleator Moor (c) were almost the same with 8.7 and 9.1 persons per house, The English in Cleator Moor were the least dense at 6.7 persons per house. Marshall refers to the average household size in Cleator Moor as 7.7 persons per household from the sample he used, which is almost the same as this sample achieves at 7.9.⁷¹

For an even more accurate picture of the ethnic groups in Cleator Village, houses having a range of occupancy of from two to twenty-five persons were plotted (Figure 5.2).

⁷⁰ 1851, *Census Enumerator's Books*, HO 107.

⁷¹ J. D. Marshall, *The Lakes Counties*, p165. [The average combined household size of the Irish and the English in Cleator Moor was achieved by summation of the average figures above: $(9.1 + 6.7)/2 = 7.9$].

Dominant English occupancy is shown for those houses accommodating from two to twelve persons and for seventeen to nineteen persons.

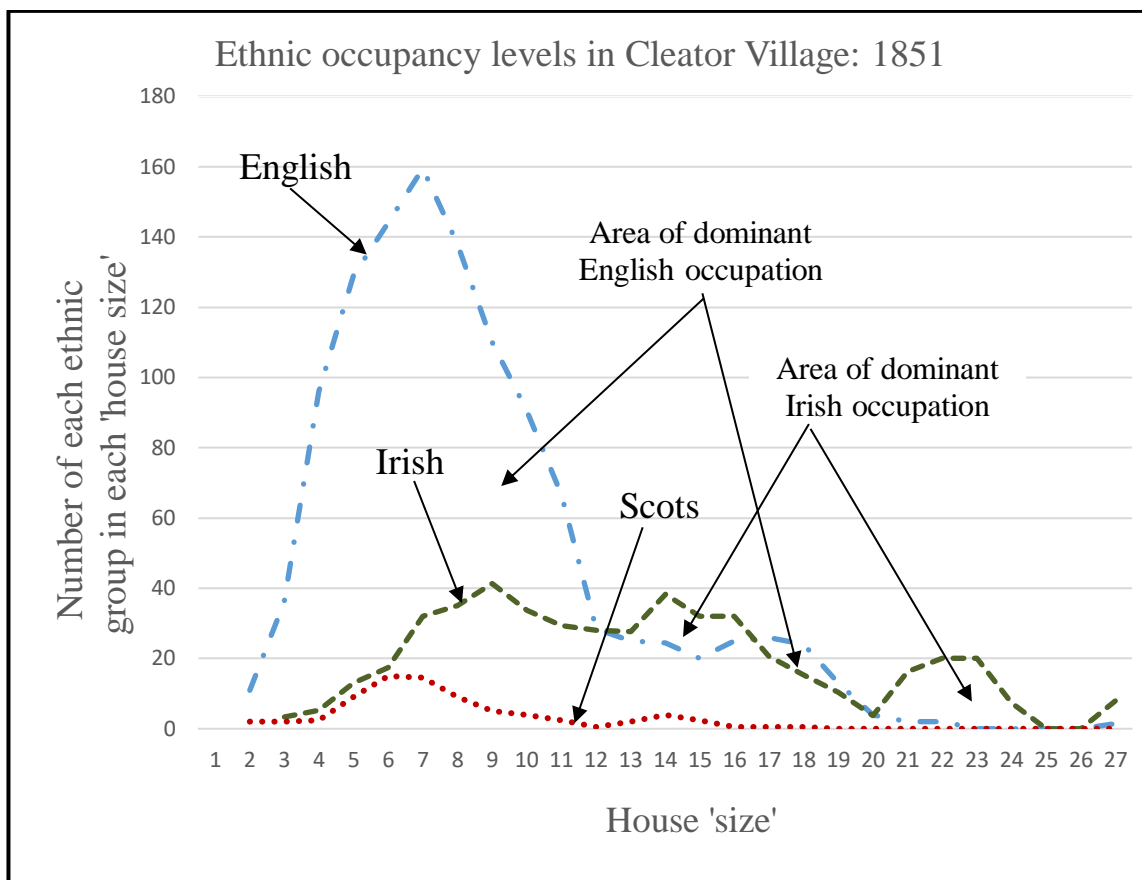


Figure 5.2: Ethnic occupancy levels in Cleator Village [Dotted lines indicate two period moving average trend lines].⁷²

The key question here is: where does the level of over-crowding begin? For a house with four rooms (two rooms on each floor), the separation of male from female sleeping areas was considered by the local and central government authorities to be important for the moral well-being of the occupants. This moral tone held all those without a sense of discipline, without work, without means of support, and most importantly without respectability, as the underserving poor and had become deeply entrenched by 1860. Apply this to the Irish or Scots pauper (and the tramping vagrant) and you had a recipe for an attitude of loathing for the morality and behaviour associated with the 'other'.⁷³ This criterion of 'gender separation' was rarely met, particularly in lodging houses where the beds as well as the rooms were overcrowded. Six persons per house was the most frequently recorded in this sample. If this maximum house 'size' is applied the English poor evidently

⁷² *Census England and Wales, 1851.*

⁷³ Peter Gray, 'Shovelling out your paupers', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 33, 4 (1999), pp. 47-65.

lived in over-crowded conditions in the graphical area shown for those houses having more than six occupants, which was the majority of houses. The Irish also lived in similar house ‘sizes’ as the English in the entire range of house ‘sizes’ plotted. Where the Irish were dominant were those houses which accommodated thirteen to sixteen and twenty to twenty-five persons, again in smaller numbers. The Scots were accommodated in the full range of house ‘sizes’ but in relatively low numbers. All ethnic groups therefore lived in overcrowded conditions alongside each other and occasionally separately. The variable was the number of each group that allowed them to dominate a particular house ‘size’.

A sample from the same area was taken using the 1861 census data by which time the effects of the expansion of the rail network had succeeded in establishing a line from Whitehaven to Cleator.

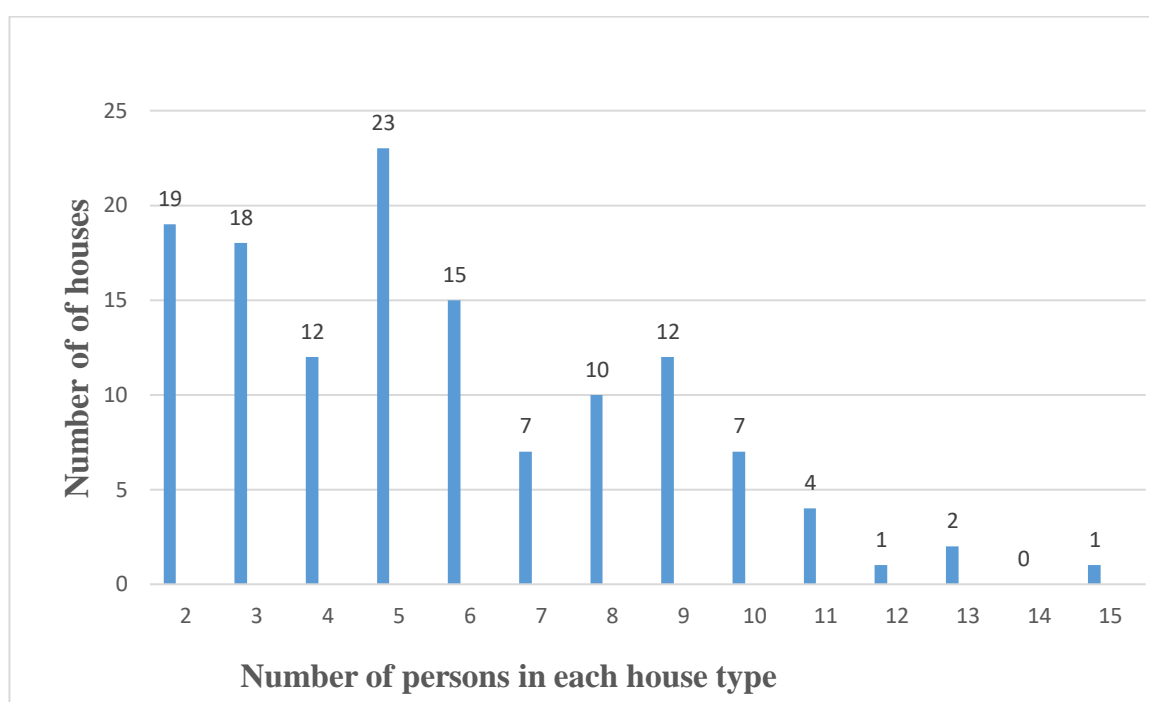


Figure 5.3: Cleator Village, house occupancy levels⁷⁴

To test the level of occupancy in Cleator Village the number of persons in 102 houses on the east side of Cleator was recorded (Figure 5.3). This showed a range of occupancy of between two and fifteen persons (average five persons per house). Eighty-seven houses recorded two to six persons of which thirty-five had an English head of household (c.44%). Houses with an occupancy level of ten or more persons were Irish in nine out of the fifteen homes in this category. The scattered Scots occupancy of ten houses only recorded the small number of thirteen persons. The health authority’s fear of disease caused by Irish overcrowding could therefore be said to be ‘partially validated’ in Cleator village.

⁷⁴ *Census England and Wales, 1861, Enumerators Books, RG9.*

Next, four terraced rows of houses were sampled in the middle of the Cleator Moor township comprising 163 houses occupied by 1,055 persons, 26% of the total population of 3,995 (Table 5.6). The average occupation level for this group of houses indicates an overall average of 6.5 persons per household which is very close to Marshall's figure of 6.4 persons for the parish. However, when the houses are separated into English, Irish and Scots occupancy a different set of results emerges.

Location	Number of houses	English	Irish	Scots	English children of Irish parentage	Total	Density of occupation %
North Street	43	28	137	7	66	238	5.8
Aldby Street	26	42	96	0	33	171	6.6
Wyndham Street	17	39	74	0	14	127	7.3
Ennerdale Road	77	201	216	19	72	508	6.6
Totals	163	310	523	26	196	1055	6.6 Ave.

Table 5.6: Sample occupancy levels of Irish, English and Scots in Cleator Moor 1861⁷⁵

As expected, the occupancy levels vary from street to street but what is noteworthy is the Irish compared to English levels of occupancy. The four streets show a lower average level of Irish occupancy at 4.7 persons per house, with the average English levels of occupancy at 8.15 persons per house. What tends to distort perceptions when making an overall assessment is the emphasis on the number of Irish households living on each street (116), which is nearly three times as many as the English (40), rather than the number of houses and their occupants (Table 5.7).

	Number of English households (persons per house)	Number of Irish households (persons per house)	Number of Scots households (persons per house)
North Street	4 (7.0)	37 (3.7)	2 (3.5)
Aldby Street	5 (8.4)	21 (4.6)	0
Wyndham Street	4 (9.8)	13 (5.7)	0
Ennerdale Road	27 (7.4)	45 (4.8)	5 (3.8)
Totals	40	116	7

Table 5.7: Sample number of Irish, English and Scots households in Cleator Moor, 1861

⁷⁵ *Census England and Wales, 1861, Enumerators' Books*, RG9.

⁷⁶ *Census England and Wales, 1861, Enumerators' Books*, RG9.

To ensure that the outlying values of high levels of occupancy are covered in this analysis, a similar Graph to that constructed for Cleator Village was plotted to show the number of house types and their occupancy levels (Figure 5.4).

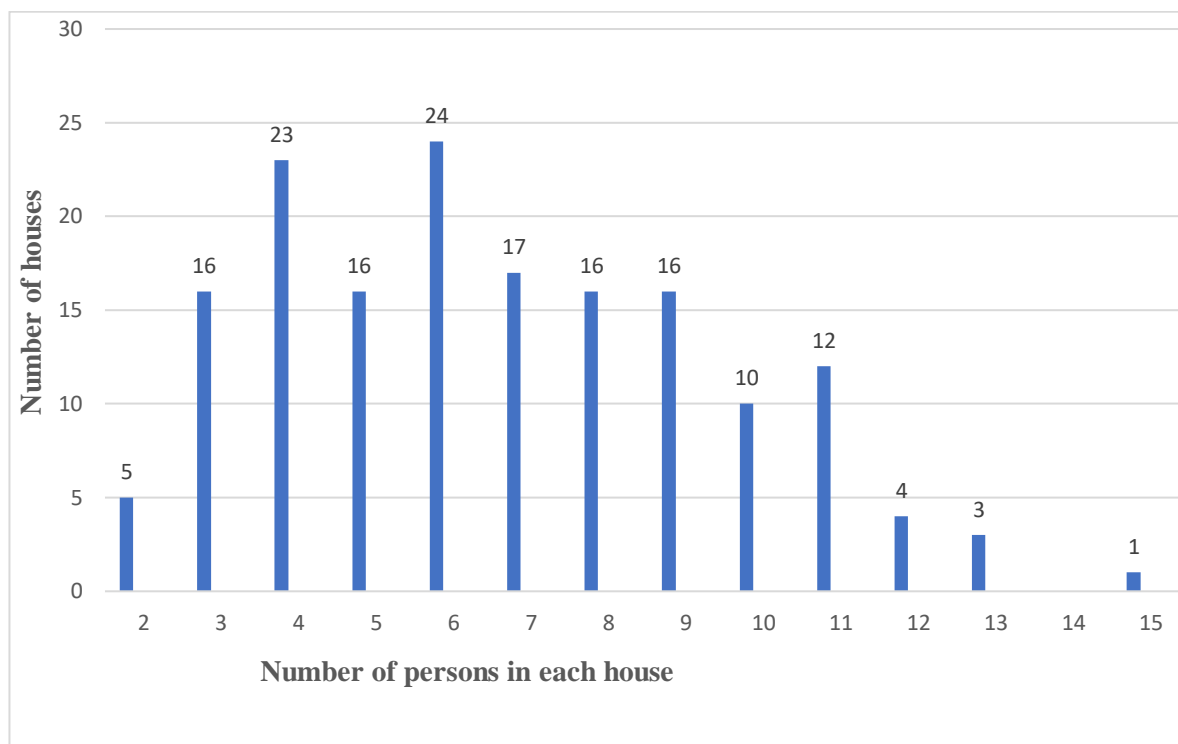


Figure 5.4: Cleator Moor, house occupancy levels in North Street, Aldby Street, Wyndham Street and Ennerdale Road, 1861⁷⁷

	Household size	Number of houses	Irish occupancy
Category 1	2 – 6 persons	85	60 (71%)
Category 2	7 – 9 persons	48	35 (73%)
Category 3	10 – 15 persons	30	18 (60%)

Table 5.8: Irish occupancy in Cleator Moor, 1861

The most important feature of Table 5.8 (which Figure 5.4 is based on), is that all categories of household size show the Irish as being the majority of occupants, but they are almost as likely to be in a household size of two to six persons (category 1) as in a household size of ten to fifteen persons (category 3). This suggests that the concept of ‘overcrowding’ is not

⁷⁷ *Census England and Wales, 1861, Enumerators’ Books*, RG9.

simply an Irish problem but one which requires more detailed study of the variables in each town or region before any conclusions can be drawn.

Donald MacRaild noted that in Cleator Moor the average number of persons per household was double that calculated nationally (1851: 9.9; 1861: 6.6) and that 'these Irish households, were considerably larger than the average'. He goes on to say that this 'indicates a clear degree of social cohesion to the units'.⁷⁸ Taking this further, it could be added that there were also many English households which provided the same conditions of occupancy as demonstrated above, and lodgers contributed to the poorer households as a necessary part of the family economy. This applies, perhaps not equally, but nevertheless to both English and Irish households. Does this indicate a degree of poverty which varied between Irish and English households? Without household income data for each home it is difficult to say, but when occupants are employed in similar types of work at the same factory there is no reason to believe there was. However, the answer to this question lies more in the frequency of occurrence of large household sizes which may or may not have been Irish, Scots or English. By a process of 'social emphasis' the Irish had become synonymous with this characteristic of poverty which had led to the idea that 'clusters' or 'ghettos' were the precept when thinking about the Irish. Thompson is firm in his conviction that, 'the Irish were never pressed back into ghettos...nor a subject minority'⁷⁹, and this is borne out in Cleator if not in Lancashire and Middlesex. The sample data collected, whilst only the tip of the iceberg, indicated that the 'overcrowding' phenomena was an Irish as well as an English problem. Yet there was still the opprobrium of the press to take account of, which highlighted the Irish and their life style and adopted a 'blame culture' by pointing to the Irish migrants as the cause of the social problems of the day whilst ignoring the above evidence. To ensure that no sympathy was wasted on the wandering Irish labour force in this part of the region the *Newcastle Journal* published extracts from an address given by the Bishop of Dublin who made the case for maintaining the impoverishment of the Irish labourer 'who were accustomed to work hard, were always on the verge of ruin, and were content with the barest necessities of life. Supply them with those necessities and they would not work at all, and their habits of industry would be destroyed for ever.'⁸⁰ Newspaper articles continued to add to the developing picture in 1847 by reporting that the Morpeth workhouse received 6,061 vagrants who claimed relief and 'the immense influx of Irish into the town during the last three months...the guardians reckon is nearly double the amount it has usually been, of

⁷⁸ D. M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration, The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool, 1998), p.54.

⁷⁹ E. P. Thompson, *The making of the working class* (London, 1991), p.480.

⁸⁰ *Newcastle Journal*, 2 April 1847, p.2.

which fifty one per cent were Irish'.⁸¹ This discussion can now be carried forward using the same methodology into Whitehaven where, the levels of migrant influx added daily to the already densely populated housing problem.

5 (vi) *Into the courts and passageways of Whitehaven*

As in many towns in Britain during the nineteenth century, Whitehaven witnessed significant rural to urban population shift. Towns across the region had sprinklings of Irish and Scots poor in their midst which seemingly went un-noticed until the influx of the 1840s when towns like Penrith a few miles north of Whitehaven began to take in the itinerant poor on the tramp to find employment and accommodation. Victorian Penrith clearly did not have the size of resident Irish population of the labour hungry west coastal towns of Whitehaven or Cleator but it served as an additional option in the hunt for a better life. As trade expanded in Whitehaven housing needs escalated as the population more than doubled from nearly 9,000 in 1801 to over 20,000 in 1851.⁸² Ironically the town was imaginatively enhanced by the architects in their nomenclature of streets to house this burgeoning population by such names as Mount Pleasant, Harmless Hill, Rosemary Lane and even the name of the town itself which could hardly be applied to the state of the housing the sanitary inspector found when he visited the town in 1848. The *Parliamentary Gazette* of 1845-46 described it as the most handsome in all the northern counties when in fact these superlatives belied the 'amount of human wretchedness and misery' in the town. In reality, the poor lived in the most marginalised and meanest of conditions, which were to become characterised by the type of housing which provided the barest of essentials in living space. Much of this was built by speculative builders in the minimum of time and led to the overcrowding which is now well known as part of the urban nineteenth-century landscape. So where did the Irish and the Scots poor feature in this landscape of 'wretchedness and misery'?

The mortality rate in Whitehaven had been recorded as between 28.13 per 1000 and 32.75 per 1000 for the years 1841-1848.⁸³ This was far too high for the medical superintendent and totally unacceptable to him. Rawlinson's analysis of these figures referred to the occurrence of disease and the significance of the lodging houses in the towns:

Of the 26 cases in Mount Pleasant in 1848, one quarter were fatal. Nearly all the cases in Ribton Lane were brought from one or two lodging houses which

⁸¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 1 May 1847, p.2; also in Frank Neal, p.206. [There are no surviving records of Morpeth's Board of Guardians Minute Books for this period].

⁸² J. D. Marshal and J. K. Walton, *The Lakes Counties*, p.25.

⁸³ 1849, *A Report of the General Board of Health*, pp.8-11; *Cumberland Pacquet and Whare's Whitehaven Advertiser*, 6 Feb 1849.

are always crowded with innumerable Irish. From Harmless Hill twelve cases were recorded entirely from one lodging house.⁸⁴

After going on to describe the state of degradation and poverty in a series of homes he observed:

The persons occupying the above are generally English who have known better times and happier days in striving to keep their own particular place clean and neat. It is far otherwise, however, with many of the Irish residents. The odour of their rooms is peculiar and offensive. When asked why they do not keep it clean they answer, "How do I do that your honour?"⁸⁵

In these observations Rawlinson did not provide any evidence that the Irish residents occupied more or less of the homes visited, nor did he indicate that there were more or less Irish homes that were more or less dirty than the English. He simply used the word 'many', which there is no reason to doubt, but impossible to enumerate. The answer he received from the resident regarding cleanliness is not difficult to understand after a later comment in his report which referred to the effluent running down the walls of the houses from a 'midden pit' higher up the side of the hill on which the houses were built. He was more specific in his categorisation of the five home types in the next section of his report. In the range of dwellings he described, he considered the high density of the population in the locality as a factor frequently associated with the Irish, a feature that the press was prone to use in their polemical articles. One witness at the meeting, called by Rawlinson to examine the state of the town, claimed that:

much of the overcrowding referred to in statements by previous witnesses occurred in the houses occupied by the Irish immigrants which included cellars, small room tenements, courts, passages and vagrant lodging houses assessed for size, occupants and livestock, including pigs, kept indoors'.⁸⁶

To test Rawlinson's claims, and those of the many witnesses to the range of Select Committees and enquiries, that the Irish were the principal occupants of the common lodging houses, Ribton Lane was isolated as one of the worst examples of housing conditions in the town. This example could be considered at the extreme edge of the poverty spectrum when considering accommodation for the poor. A survey was carried out using the nearest data set from the 1851 census. The three- year gap since Rawlinson's report would inevitably have resulted in some demographic changes in the town. But a report carried out fifteen years later in 1863 indicated little change in either housing conditions or occupancy levels to those of 1848, therefore the 1851 census figures can be used with some confidence. Ribton Lane

⁸⁴ Rawlinson Report (1849), p.11.

⁸⁵ Rawlinson Report, 1849, p.14.

⁸⁶ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 30 Jan 1849, p.3.

was comprised of 25 houses occupied by 64% English, 34% Irish, 2% Scots (Table 5.12 Appendix). For the twelve houses defined as common lodging houses on the Lane there was a relatively even distribution of Irish and English with an overall proportion of 52% of English, 45% of Irish and a small proportion (3%) of Scots (Table 5.9).

House Ref No	Irish	English	Scots	Total
141-3	9	4	-	13
144-6	10	4	2	16
147-50	6	4	2	12
151-4	14	6	-	20
155-6	1	7	-	8
158-9	-	5	-	5
160-1	5	3	-	8
167-70	3	7	-	10
171-6	5	20		25
176	5	4	-	9
183-6	5	6	-	11
188-9	4	8	-	12
Totals	67 (45%)	78 (52%)	4 (3%)	149

Table 5.9: Common lodging houses, Ribton lane, Whitehaven⁸⁷

The high level of Irish occupancy in these particular houses on this particular street, when compared to the overall level of occupancy in the rest of the town, was extraordinarily high. As the study will demonstrate, one street in Whitehaven is no statistical guide to ethnic occupancy levels. Two important elements emerged. First, Ribton Lane, isolated as the worst example of poverty in the town and referred to several times in Rawlinson's report, had a majority of English occupants – *twice as many* as Irish occupants. The second was that the two houses with the largest number of occupants, one with 20 residents, the other with 25, had contrasting numbers of Irish and English occupancy ratios: one with 14 Irish to 6 English, the other 5 Irish to 20 English. These findings demonstrate with clarity that in the 'worst street' in Whitehaven there were more English occupants than Irish, and in the two houses with the highest number of occupants there were similar numbers of Irish and English. T. F. l'Anson, a local resident surgeon, told Rawlinson in 1849 that, 'nearly all the cases [*of cholera*] from Ribton Lane were brought from one or two lodging houses, which are always crowded with innumerable Irish'⁸⁸ (Table 5.10).

⁸⁷ *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books*, HO 24366, S & N British Data Archive

⁸⁸ Rawlinson Report, 1849, p.8.

	1847	1848
Mount Pleasant	30	26
Charles Street	2	37
Ribton Lane	7	3
Harmless Hill	12	-

Table 5.10: Number of cholera cases in specific Whitehaven streets

‘Always’ and ‘innumerable’ were unfortunately words which were casually applied in the authority’s reports and promoted misconceptions and inaccuracies to be embedded in the language of the day. Both were seen to be unqualified and unjustifiable descriptive terms when the above statistics were evaluated. The numbers of migrants in the west of town were referred to as a specific nuisance in the several reports but it can be asserted that there were fewer Irish than English both as an overall proportion of the local population and numerically, with no bias evident in Irish occupancy when looking at an individual street. However, this was only one street in the whole of Whitehaven.

Rawlinson’s report, whilst attempting to provide a realistic portrayal of living conditions in several houses, does not quantify households or density of occupation across whole streets or areas. To do this, and at the same time use the same area of habitation that he surveyed, census data from the 1851 national survey was utilised. The sample area consisted of sixteen streets, courts and lanes and provided a remarkably similar picture to the ‘one street’ Ribton Lane survey. 226 houses, including 25 lodging houses, provided homes for 920 English (66%), 437 Irish (32%) and 29 Scots (2%), a total of 1386 occupants (Appendix, Table 5.12). Only two small courts of four to six houses were recorded as having 50% - 57% of Irish occupants. For the other 216 houses in fourteen lanes and courts the Irish were in the minority (13% to 44%). Most importantly, all were characterised by their multiple occupancy of English/Irish/Scots residents. None was exclusively English, Irish or Scots. There was a clear indication of the dominance of English heads of households in the sample which was recorded as 61%, compared to the Irish heads of households at 39% (Table 5.15). This figure concurred approximately with the overall occupancy ratio of English to Irish. Two further figures are of interest: the numbers of lodgers at 12% of the total occupants and numbers of children at 33%. Where the Irish may have displayed their particularity was in the number of lodgers residing with them. In short, Irish households tended to include more than one family but it was common for the press to report on *household* size as a measure of Irish *family* size which was a distortion of the statistics. In the lanes and courts tabulated in this study twelve per cent of the occupants were lodgers

(Table 5.13). This frequency of lodgers in all households suggested the high value of the income supplement for families on low incomes and could be construed as an intrinsic coping strategy. King and Tomkins suggested this as a plausible model for the idea of ‘fictive kin’ to avoid poverty.⁸⁹ With friends, neighbours, occupational ‘mates’ (as oppose to ‘colleagues’), there could be close emotional and financial terms established to avoid crises. The Irish labouring class would have found benefit from such relationships, which almost certainly existed in common lodging houses.

As could be expected the most recurrent job classification, referred to as ‘*Rank, Profession or Occupation*’ on the census enumerator’s sheets, was ‘coal miner’ followed by ‘agricultural labourer’. Ribton Lane, despite being at the extreme end of the poverty spectrum, listed occupations amongst the Irish as ranging across fourteen different forms of employment including cotton weaver, fisherwoman, hatter, stone mason, coach driver, servant, and one male who was listed as an Irish schoolmaster occupying a house with his wife and eight-year-old daughter. They could possibly have been on a temporary halt before moving on to improved circumstances but this serves to indicate a flaw in this form of social survey as the census snapshot offers no clear indication of the length of residency of any of the occupants nor whether they were in or out of work. In the same area of the town there were 132 children of Irish parentage (31%) who were registered as English in the sample out of a total number of 428 children counted (Table 5.14). The age range of these children was surprisingly wide, the eldest being fourteen and the youngest less than one year for many families. The younger members (less than six years) were frequently the ones registered as English suggesting that these were born of Irish parents’ resident after the famine migration. The older children would probably have accompanied their parents on the migration journey. Many Irish families would have moved away from Whitehaven to find other work, perhaps at Cleator, a feature of Irish mobility in west Cumberland of which little is known. Marshall and Walton uncovered similar characteristics of family structure and history in their Cleator Moor study which demonstrated that few Irish heads of households were young men and most of their children were under three suggesting that they had been resident in the village for at least three years. Only one street, Heslop Court, had a majority of Irish occupancy (57%); the remainder were between 12% and 50% (Table 5.12). The overall average number of persons per house in this survey was 6.1 but, evidently, these figures were much higher for individual houses such as those examined on Ribton lane. It is possible to argue that the ghettoising of an area would take much higher concentrations of a particular group if the

⁸⁹ Peter King and Allanah Tomkins, *The Poor of England 1700-1850* (Manchester, 2003), p.265.

meaning of the concept is to be taken seriously and O'Leary's argument carries some weight in this instance when he writes:

there were no predominantly Irish districts, just areas where the Irish lived with the English and others..., it is unlikely that the Irish overcrowding and clustering would have received so much anguished attention had it not been for the fever associated with migration of 1847.⁹⁰

Herson agrees when writing about Stafford on the same theme, 'The Irish were to be found scattered throughout the town, mostly in pockets of slum housing which existed before the bulk of the Irish arrived'.⁹¹ The question remains, was there an Irish presence across Whitehaven which could be justifiably termed segregated, separated or ghettoised?

To answer this question a sample was taken from Whitehaven from the 1851 census data provided in the CEBs. The sample was limited to the town's main residential area where the majority of the migrants were known to have lived and excluded the outer residential areas of Harrington, Hensingham, Preston Quarter and the rural hinterland even though they were known to contain Irish and Scots residents. The town was divided into roughly three parts: the west side, the east side and the central area (Figure 5.5). The sample size of 14,373 residents comprised 12,319 English (86%), 1,777 Irish (12%), 277 Scots (2%) [Tables 5.16 & 5.18, Appendix]. What is very clear from the data is that all ethnic groups lived in the three areas outlined on the map in relatively similar proportions: English (28-36%); Irish (26-42%); Scots (29-36%) [Table 5.18]. Although the sample did not record occupancy levels of individual houses, and therefore measure any degree of overcrowding, it clearly indicated that all groups lived alongside each other in all areas, including the poorest areas referred to in Rawlinson's report. Of the 277 Scots recorded across the town there did not appear to be any concentration of occupation except for one street where thirteen Scots were located. Instead, they were found to be generally sprinkled across the town in small numbers as lodgers or residents in all areas. The only difference between the Irish and Scots occupancy was the number of persons, not the preferred location. Pooley emphasised that the Irish were indeed found in particular courts, alleys, passageways and streets such as those described here in Whitehaven, but he also insists on the recognition that they were also residents living alongside the local population in most other parts of nineteenth-century towns.⁹² This study may concur with Pooley's findings in Whitehaven but the implications of this go deeper than a quantitative conclusion for Whitehaven. Finding reasons for

⁹⁰ Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration, The Irish in Wales 1798-1922* (Cardiff, 2000), p.127.

⁹¹ Dr Edward Knight, 'On the sanitary state of the town of Stafford', in *Local Reports on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population in England, 1842*, XXVII, p.225, in Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in Britain*, p.95.

⁹² Colin Pooley, 'Segregation or Integration?' in *The Irish in Britain*, Swift and Gilley, (eds.), pp.72-74.

segregation of specific groups is not difficult, given the range of characteristics which are often provided by sociologists to prove their isolation from the host community. On the other hand, any quantitative analysis which strives to define the sense of identity of a community is prone to draw tenuous conclusions. Whitehaven may have had a recognisable minority of migrants but no evidence has arisen to corroborate their perceived ghettoisation. A majority of migrants on one street, 77% in the case of Ribton Lane, could have been very much a part of the life of the town in the same way as any other street composed of mainly English residents. Indeed, its location close to the harbour and the employment in dock labouring, fish processing and the development of the harbour coal facilities made streets in this part of town a preferred location as a vital labour resource in the machinery of everyday life

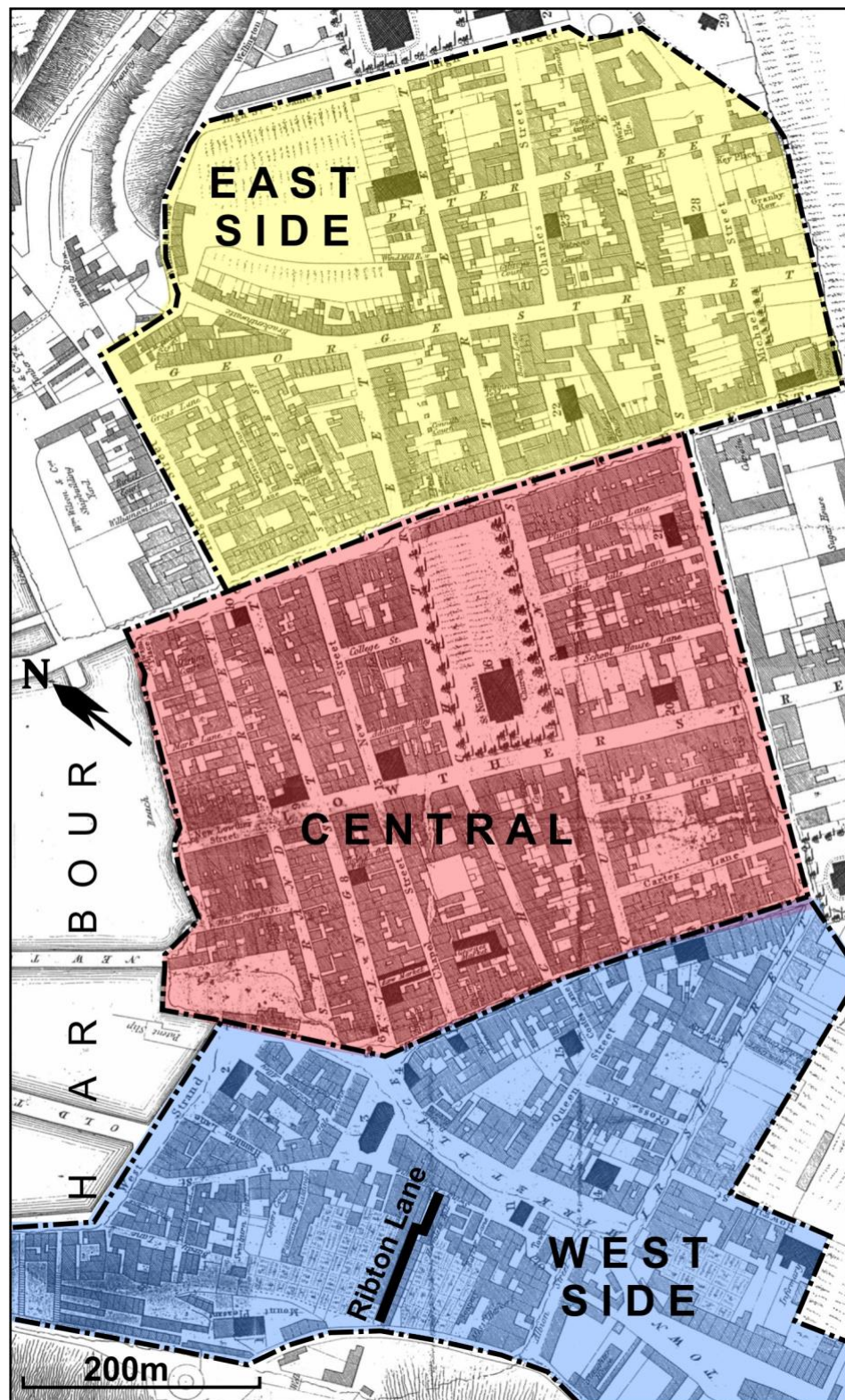


Figure 5.5: Whitehaven residential areas.⁹³

Furthermore, in the historiography, from Lees ground-breaking work to the present day, the concepts of the ghetto and segregation of ethnic groups has become discredited as a

⁹³ CRO, *Ford Map*, 1830.

specifically Irish urban phenomenon in that ‘the Irish were not ostracised or locked in urban ghettos but mostly relegated to side streets and back alleys of their neighbourhoods ...those who lived in the quieter, more expensive areas of town in perhaps equal numbers and lower concentrations went unnoticed’.⁹⁴

5 (vii) *Conclusion*

Rawlinson’s report was based on the housing conditions and state of the town rather than the density of population of the Irish in the town which accorded with the brief he had from Edwin Chadwick and the *Health of the Towns Association*. Lodging houses were inevitably the places where his attention was drawn from a sanitary and health perspective but that did not prevent him from alluding to the Irish poor on more than one occasion. On this theme, he summarised his findings:

There are 24 houses in this class which have in the whole 68 rooms and 120 beds. The lodging houses in most the towns are the worst form of residence to be found in the district: but in Whitehaven it is not so, here they can only rank with the better conditioned roomed tenements.⁹⁵

With limited options the Irish and Scots poor frequently chose places to live on the extreme margins of the lowest economic continuum which included the common lodging house where they had some chance of meeting up with their fellow countrymen. This did lead to some degree of ‘clustering’ in overcrowded accommodation. The tendency to have a stronger gathering of the Irish in an area which had already established a ‘foothold’ was evidently one reason for the grouping of Irish in specific areas. However, no evidence of the ghetto phenomenon was found in Whitehaven. The hypothesis that the Irish lived in disease ridden ghettos cannot be substantiated, although they could be identified as the principal occupants of some common lodging houses and in Cleator occupied some of the most densely populated houses. This was not however simply an Irish problem as they were almost as likely to be in a household size of two to six persons as a household of ten to fifteen persons. Even the ‘worst’ houses in the ‘worst streets’ were not dominated by Irish households in Whitehaven in 1851. The Scots were thinly spread across Whitehaven and lived in similar housing conditions as the English and Irish but in smaller numbers. What can be asserted is that the English, Irish and Scots poor in Whitehaven lived in similar conditions to others in the same area in shared housing and shared streets. What the results demonstrated in practice was the existence of ‘poverty ghettos’. These could be defined as

⁹⁴ L. H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979), p. 63.

⁹⁵ Rawlinson Report, 1849, p.15.

specific areas where there was a significant problem of poverty exhibiting the kind of problems that Rawlinson found in his report. That all dwellings should be connected to a drainage system and provided with tap water and water closets in clean streets was fine but, so far, only available to the wealthy.⁹⁶

Fourteen years after the Rawnsley report J. S. Bristowe carried out a similar one focusing on more or less the same criteria. He condemned the lack of progress by the town's leaders when he said: 'The condition of the town remains precisely as it was, and the graphic description of what he has put on record applies with undiminished forces to the Whitehaven of today! The public Health Act was not applied'.⁹⁷ The poverty of Whitehaven and other towns in this Union district, despite the threats of previous cholera epidemics, was still not on the authority's improvement agenda and the Irish living in some of the most neglected areas would continue to be impugned for their misperceived lifestyle. Given the size of the Irish population, the continued demand for accommodation, and the observations of the several inspectors of the housing stock, it is not surprising that the newspapers were tempted to scapegoat the Irish by using the power of the pen to communicate the menace of these foreigners.

A further factor which had some bearing on the rate of growth of the town and hence the increased demand for housing was undoubtedly the movement of individuals and families away from Whitehaven towards the east coast. If this influx and subsequent partial exodus had not taken place, the demand for housing would have been even greater than it was, and critically it would have exacerbated the conditions that Rawlinson reported on in 1848. In exploring the evidence and statistics which contributed to the overall picture of life for the migrant communities not one story from the hand of the Irish and the Scots poor has emerged. What is left to the historian are the stories of those who rejected them, counted them, controlled them and cared for them. Migration into these circumstances could for many have been no more than a strategy in coping with the poverty they had left behind. The next chapter will centre on aspects of charity and relief which enabled the Scots and the Irish migrants to survive as 'incomers' and strangers in the far north in that critical period of history now known as the Great famine of Ireland.

⁹⁶ C. Hamlin, (2000), p.297.

⁹⁷ J. S. Bristowe, *Report from the Inspector on the Sanitary State of Whitehaven*, 1863.

Chapter 6

The Irish and Scots poor in the textile trade

6 (i) *Weaving and spinning for a living*

I do not think there are many at the point of starvation. But there is great suffering. All the clothes they have, except what are on their backs, are generally pawned - not for drink as has been said by some, but for food for themselves and their families.¹

These words, spoken by Mr. Barr, the representative of the Weavers' Committee at the enquiry into the State of the Handloom Weavers, speak vividly about the depth to which weavers had fallen in the face of economic hardship brought about by recession and the decline of their trade. From robustly independent and well-paid work, the weavers were increasingly depressed by declining piece rates. Amongst the handloom weaving labour force were Irish and Scots migrants who, alongside their English neighbours, were struggling to avoid starvation. Some commentators were known to have condemned them for their condition by blaming it on drink, as the quotation recognised. The characteristic of drunken idleness was often attributed to the Irish in the nineteenth century in the early Victorian period. The sentiments were starker still, maintaining that the needs of the poor were best decided by striking the difference between those most elusive of terms 'deserving and undeserving'.

Weavers were traditionally left in the half-light, with the attributes of sentience and dignity; instead they were noted in lurid descriptions and written off as collateral damage in the progress of modernity. The continued condescension, arising from this attitude, was famously turned by E. P. Thompson into a mantra of recognition when he said, 'I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan...from the enormous condescension of posterity'.² To Thompson, the historical detritus of forgotten groups and marginal folk deserved their history. Certainly, the history of industrial and urban growth cannot be fully grasped without them. This necessarily appears still more urgent for the many thousands of Irish and Scots from rural backgrounds who made their way to the urban centres. These were important cogs in pre-Famine Irish and Scottish immigration to the counties of the far north. Across the border town of Carlisle 'the distress and misery of increasing numbers reduced to the ranks of wretchedness and despondency living as a separate group from one other' had become

¹ 1840 (639), *Report on the Condition of Handloom Weavers*, p. xx.

² E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (London, 1963). p.12.

commonplace.³ This wretchedness was described by Benjamin Disraeli when he made a similar indictment of society as a whole:

the gulf between the two nations [the rich and the poor] was utterly impassable. Two nations, between them there is no intercourse and no sympathy...who are formed by different breeding, fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.⁴

The attitude of the government commissioners however, was not to focus on the weavers' condition, nor the ideology of a future Prime Minister, but their lifestyle, which they claimed to know something about when they referred to 'their leisure time and freedom to do as they please ...their high degree of freedom from external supervision; being a master of their own time, and sole guide of their actions, being free to play or idle, as feeling or inclination leads them'.⁵ The idea that the ownership of a handloom made the weaver into an independent manufacturer to enjoy the freedom of home based employment, is to misinterpret the domestic circumstances of the families engaged in this work. They did not own the cloth, the loom, the trading of the material nor the pricing of the finished product. As a subcontractor, they formed a small but essential party of the process and were paid by the employer for their part in it. For the women, as co-workers in the trade, the opportunity to escape at will from the demands of their families would have been virtually impossible.

Given the literature on the experiences of handloom weavers, and their representation as the archetypal handicraft workers who wanted higher wages, by the 1840s they were suffering greater and greater immiseration due to the advances of technology or overcrowding in the labour market. This came in the form of a downward spiral of wages, which approached starvation levels through the 1840s and 1850s. The obsolescence of the handloom weaver had not yet swept into the far north but the writing was on the wall as more and more weavers became victims of the progress of steam power in the decade that followed. J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton pointed to the difficulties that historians have today when attempting to evaluate the circumstances of the mass of workers who strived to make a living as weavers or spinners, whether English or migrants in the working class.⁶ But posterity had no need of condescension when attempting to weigh the significance of this group of workers. The handloom weaver was essentially, at least until the 1840s, the backbone of the domestic economy for the native- English and Scots and Irish migrants. The

³ *Carlisle Journal*, 30 June 1838.

⁴ B. Disraeli, *Sybil or The Two Nations*, (London, 1845, repr. Plymouth, 1905), p.99.

⁵ 1840 (220), *Report from Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers of Counties of Lancaster, Westmorland, Cumberland and Part of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, Part III, pp.601-2.

⁶ J. D. Marshall and John K. Walton, *The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century* (Manchester, 1981), p.10-11.

work had a particular attraction for migrants, in both a rural and an urban setting, as a continuation of the traditional way of life that they had been used to for centuries. As the largest occupational group, they were prominent amongst the poor and described as ‘numerous hordes of idle and unsettled’ and branded as the cause of Carlisle’s financial difficulties.⁷ Moreover, authors of parliamentary reports from the late eighteenth century onwards were cited time and again in the contemporary newspapers as those who had the answer to the plight of the poor.

This chapter is about the official recognition and the outcome of an intolerable situation for the relentless poverty of the Irish and Scots who lived and worked alongside their English hosts. It tests the significance of these migrants in the textile industry and makes comparisons with the English host population in Carlisle. As a major manufacturing centre and an important location of migrant labour, there will be scope to assess the grinding poverty in the lives of the migrants and refugees who found themselves in an environment, sometimes separated, often alien, but always different to the poverty they had left behind. The chapter will also look at the lives of female migrants, employed both in the home and in the factory, to evaluate their contribution to the domestic economy of the poor and the extent to which the employer relied on their participation in the workforce.

6 (ii) *Location, population and industry*

Far from seeing handloom weavers as skilled elites whose livelihood was destroyed by the machine, Duncan Bythell, as a major contributor to the history of the Irish in Britain, makes two convincing assertions, which undermined the Hammonds’ hypotheses that handloom weaving was a skilled trade and the deterioration of the material well-being of the handloom weaver was the result of the coming of the power-loom.⁸ Firstly, from its earliest days, handloom weaving was an unskilled casual occupation and easy to pick up. As one newspaper reported in 1818, ‘three weeks were reckoned a sufficient length of time to teach a mere labourer to weave calico’.⁹ Indeed, inmates in workhouses and prisons were often taught to weave so that they had something to maintain themselves when they left the institutions.¹⁰ It provided a domestic by-employment for thousands of women and children, whose earnings were quite low.

⁷ *Carlisle Journal*, 12 February 1817.

⁸ J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, *The Town Labourer* (London, 1917), p.296.

⁹ *Manchester Exchange Herald*, 22 September 1818.

¹⁰ *Manchester Mercury*, 18 May 1819.

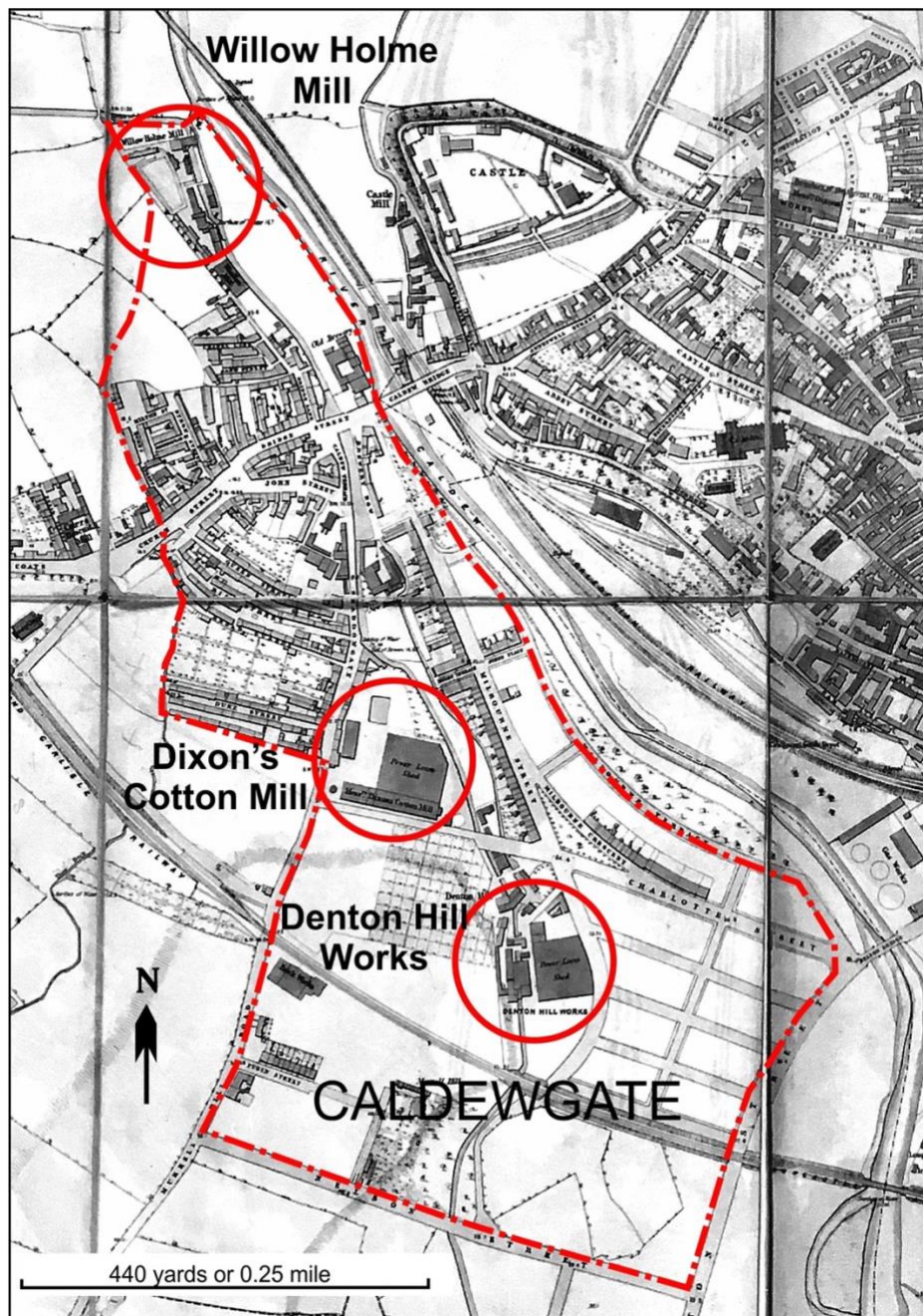


Figure 6.1: Location of textile mills, Caldewgate district, Carlisle.¹¹

Secondly the suffering of the weaver was at least as bad before 1820 prior to the power-loom, as afterwards.¹² This opinion appears repeatedly in the extant literature and will be examined further in this chapter.

Weavers were present in large numbers in early nineteenth-century Cumberland, both in the city of Carlisle where mills such as Dixons in Shaddongate were employing thousands in the 1830s, and also in the small villages and surrounding towns where out-work was still common. Characterised by the locality, the Irish and Scots migrants living in this

¹¹ CRO, *Ordnance Survey, First Series, 1865*.

¹² Duncan Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers* (Cambridge 1969), p. 142-4.

area became known as ‘Shaddongaters’.¹³ Handloom weaving had brought many Ulster weavers to the region and to the west of Scotland from the 1780s,¹⁴ which form an important part of any study of the Irish and Scots and other handicraft workers in the region, and most expressly they are fundamental to this study of immigrant poverty.

The weavers operated from three positions in the manufacturing process in and around Carlisle: the home or workshops; the modern power-driven weaving shed; and the handloom weaving shed, a transitional stage between the handloom and the power-driven factory process.¹⁵ Concentrations of these processes were scattered around the weaving area. The history of the growth of industrial capacity shows that in 1816, there were 1200 looms in the city and around 1000 looms in surrounding villages.¹⁶ By 1823 it was reported that 14,000 people were employed in weaving in the county of Cumberland with more than a third (c.5,000) working in Carlisle.¹⁷ The recorded workforce for just one of the four major employers in the town (Peter Dixon and Sons) accounted for 3,571 workers, so this figure does not seem unreasonable. In the first quarter of the century this translated to a continuous positive growth. In 1838, there were said to be ‘as many handlooms still at work in Carlisle as there had been in 1824, although the number had fallen off in the surrounding villages’.¹⁸ This was a sure indicator that the weaving industry was still a viable business in the town with approximately 3.5% of the total British weaving workforce of 110,000 workers. Other towns such as Coventry in the Midlands had similar capacity in the 1850s. W. Kay, a government commissioner and inspector, with some experience in reporting on the poverty of migrants, particularly Irish, recognised that handloom weavers had their difficulties. In his opinion, these difficulties were not due solely to low wages and the deprivation that resulted from lack of food and decent shelter, but also due to the ‘savage’ in the nature of the Irish. As he explained:

‘the Irish have taught the labouring classes of this country a pernicious lesson... debased alike by ignorance and pauperism, they have discovered with the savage what is the minimum means of life upon which existence may be prolonged’.¹⁹

¹³ Katrina Navickas, ‘Captain Swing in the North’, *History Workshop Journal*, 71 (2011), p. 11.

¹⁴ Graham Walker in T. Devine (ed.), *Irish in Scotland*; D. M. MacRaid, *Irish Diaspora in Britain, labour migration*; Katrina Navickas, ‘Captain Swing in the North’, *History Workshop Journal*, 71 (2011), pp. 5-28.

¹⁵ Roderick Floud and Donald McCloskey, *The Economic History of Britain Since 1700* (Cambridge, 1994), p.133.

¹⁶ Lyson, *Magna Britannia*, vol. 4, 1816.

¹⁷ *Carlisle Journal*, 15 March 1823.

¹⁸ 1840 (220), *Report on the Condition of Handloom*, xxiv, p.586 [This report refers to Peter Dixons, as the main employer of textile workers, still having 3,814 loom weavers on their pay-role in 1838, three fifths of which were men, p.606]; *Carlisle Journal*, 23 June 1838. [Radford’s assessment from the data he collected puts the national total at around 225,000, which means Carlisle had the small proportion of 1.7%].

¹⁹ James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London, 1832), p. 44.

In his assessment of the future prospects for the cotton industry Kay referred to possible preferred sources of labour to facilitate progress. His solution was to encourage migration of agricultural labouring families from the south of England as ‘the only alternative to the extensive immigration of the Irish’, which he considered to be ‘not an unmingled effect and should proceed with great caution lest the supply outstrip the legitimate demand’.²⁰ His comments were particularly scathing when he made his fears known about the problem of contamination by the Irish of those they came into contact with.²¹ He knew where his priorities lay when he sought to ensure that English migrants from the south were first in the queue for work, and Irish migrants should be discouraged wherever possible. The business fraternity however were keen to maximize its labour options and the Irish and Scots migrants were an essential component of that equation.

As more and more of Carlisle’s textile workers struggled to make ends as the handloom came under increasing pressure from the exploitation of the power loom, some did manage to find the energy to resist the flow of inevitable scrappage of their domestic economy. In previous decades migrants had demonstrated their resistance to a series of injustices that they perceived were employer instigated only a few miles south of Carlisle:

A crowd of 600-700 persons, ‘*mostly sailor, Irish and poor persons out of work*’ [my italics], marched the four miles from Maryport to Allonby to attack a warehouse filled with oatmeal, flour and barley intended for the Liverpool market. That night they took a great deal away with them and the next day returned for the rest, which they carried off in various places.²²

This journalist’s use of the three categories in the crowd reserves one for the Irish, a category curiously separated from ‘poor persons out of work’. This was frequently the format for such news reports. The event was described by reference to minority groups, often used as a scapegoat. Moreover, any trade difficulties were persistently referred to as ‘employers’ difficulties’ rather than employees’ attempts to improve wages. These are the words of an editor working for a Tory newspaper owned by Lord Lowther, an influential landowning member of the Cumberland aristocracy, which contrasted with the *Carlisle Journal*, a Whig-leaning relatively neutral toned newspaper.

The protesting voice of the weaver was only heard occasionally at Select Committee hearings. The only consequences the protesters were concerned with were those that resulted in change for the better, and it was the Irish and Scots flags amongst the banners on marches in Carlisle, that testified to their involvement and active concern

²⁰ 1835 (500), *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales*, p.187.

²¹ F. Neal, *Black 47* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.27.

²² *Carlisle Patriot*, 8 and 15 March 1817.

for their future livelihood.²³ This activism was reported in the local press: ‘the residents of Duke Street , most of whom were Irish, had provided themselves with a green flag with the words, we know our rights and will maintain them’.²⁴ However, these rights proved extremely difficult to assert both at local and national level. In 1840 W. E. Hickson, one of the commission’s inspectors and an educationalist primarily interested in the children of weavers, produced a report based on his very limited knowledge of the industry that claimed the Irish weavers formed at least one half of the cotton weavers work force.²⁵ This was probably an overestimation. He argued that younger men rarely depended solely on the loom, ‘They calculate upon field-work in harvest time; upon the produce of the potato settings; in some areas upon fishing; and occasional employment in various capacities’.²⁶ On the last point Hickson was more accurate in that by-employment was a way of life for the migrant who traditionally had applied themselves to seasonal harvest work. Bythell however, dismissed his estimate of the size of the labour force and contended that the Irish migrant provided only a small proportion of recruits in small towns and country districts. His study of the weavers in the north-west of England pointed to the importance of weaving as a part-time job rather than full-time when he said, ‘It furnished the kind of occupation for the aged, the unmarried sisters and daughters and the growing children in the family...they wove only when time and inclination suited, or necessity compelled them to make a contribution’.²⁷ Brian Inglis describes Duncan Bythell as an optimist in his assessment of the labourers’ improving standard of living. Bythell’s suggestion that the handloom weavers were not as badly off as was made out, and it was their fault for staying in the business when there were plenty of jobs which they could have turned their hand to, pointed a disapproving finger at the labourers’ attitude rather than their condition in Inglis’ view. The deciding qualifying factor in this debate was the standard of living, which was of course a question of family earnings. Inglis uses the comparison of a man, his wife and two children working 12 hours a day six days a week earning 25s, as better off than a man earning 20s a week, whilst his children were at school and his wife doing the housework without reference to the difference in the quality of the lives that this meant to the families, which was the premise that the Hammonds based their argument upon.²⁸ This was a reasonable assertion, but whether the Irish migrant component of the labour force, which

²³ *Northern Star*, 27 October 1838.

²⁴ J. C. F. Barnes, ‘The trade union and radical activities of the Carlisle handloom weavers,’ *TCWAAS, New Series*, 78, (1978), p.94.

²⁵ 1840 (639), *Report on the condition of the hand-loom weavers*, p.693.

²⁶ S. J. Chapman, *The Cotton Industry* (1904), pp.9-10; G. W. Daniels, *The Early English Cotton Industry* (1920), pp. 136-9.

²⁷ D. Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, pp.58-61.

²⁸ Brian Inglis, *Poverty and the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1972), pp.30-31.

necessarily included both males and females, was significant and effective in small towns such as Carlisle will be considered here.

The proportion of income that was derived from weaving was difficult to assess with any accuracy but what is known is that men, women and children derived income from it and many relied on it entirely. A further criticism of Bythell's approach to interpreting the means of livelihood of the Irish migrant was his allegiance to the commonly quoted assertion that 'the Irish, who often disliked the discipline of more organised forms of work, also accepted a lower standard of living.'²⁹ If the poverty that the Irish migrants had emerged from was as extreme as was commonly accepted, then the 'low standard of living' that they experienced in England would probably have been considerably better than that which they had experienced in their homeland. The claim that the Irish migrant disliked organised forms of work probably alluded to the regimented factory system after coming from a mainly rural background, but their involvement in the building and weaving trades depended on a managed and disciplined lifestyle in order to meet the demands the employers' organised forms of work, both in the home, when 'putting out' work, and in the factory. This to some degree attested to their adaptability.

Clearly there was some concern in the earlier reports that the migrants were a very real problem, but this could have been due to a reluctance to acknowledge that the migrants made a significant and valuable contribution to the prosperity of the city. The report in 1827 stated 'one quarter of the city's population were unemployed Irish'.³⁰ Perhaps this was an attempt to draw attention to the relief payments being made at the expense of the rate payer. There were in fact similar numbers of Scots in the city at the time, which meant that around half the population would have been migrants. Dr. Heysham, the Carlisle demographer, concurred with this assessment when he said that there were very few Irish Catholic families in the town before the turn of the century, but by 1827 it could be claimed that a quarter of the inhabitants were Irish, with a like proportion of Scots.³¹ Moreover, local church attendance figures provide some idea of numbers of Catholic Irish in the city who were thought to have accounted for 25% of the population in 1826 and by 1847 numbered around 2,500 members.³² This underlines the 'international' character of Carlisle with around half the population who were not English. Any claim to its 'Englishness', based on these estimates, was therefore due more to its geographical location rather than its demography.

²⁹ Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, p.63.

³⁰ *Carlisle Journal*, May 1823.

³¹ John Heysham, 'Observations of the Bills of Mortality for 1779' in H. Lonsdale, *Life of Dr. Heysham* (1860), p.14; *Carlisle Journal*, January 20 1827.

³² Henderson, *Carlisle Directory*, 1847.

Out of a total workforce of 3,571 who were provided with work over the borders, 599 were domestic weavers in Scotland (16.8%) and as many as 583 in Ireland (16.3%).³³ It would not be unreasonable to assume that every available Irish and Scots migrant in the area would have been on the lookout for work in the heart of the Dixon weaving empire. This form of sub-contractual arrangement between the employer and the worker was known as the 'putting-out system' and allowed significant cost savings to be made by the factory owner who contracted the handloom weavers and knitters based in the home, to provide items on a 'piece-work' basis. All supervisory pay and any perceived defects could be subtracted from the price of the item when collected from the worker.³⁴ The social divisions (as with Irish labour) provided ideal conditions for the emergence of 'sweated' outwork and allowed several levels of sub-contracting by the use of middlemen who agreed rates and piecework with the domestic weaving labour force.³⁵ The fact that the hand-loom weavers of even one employer were scattered over an extensive district, presented a constant opportunity to obtain the lowest price for the weavers' work. This ensured that the employer had no liability for goods which fell below the employers' standards, and were at their discretion at the time of payment. There were no manufacturing overheads, no costs for machinery, no property workspace, heating, lighting or supervision costs. In short, the employer passed his costs to the employee who had no protection from the employers' standards and neither for the payment he was entitled to receive.

In addition to the larger manufacturers there were the 'loom shops'. Jeremy Godwin's study of the early development of the textile industry in Carlisle points to the concentration of these in the back alleys of Carlisle such as Duke Street and Broadguards in Caldewgate. In these buildings, many of them owned by the cotton manufacturers, all workers were paid a pittance for their labour, but they were also obliged to buy or rent their looms or stocking frames.³⁶ These, and similar housing areas in the town, together with the common lodging houses, provided cheap rented housing and were the most likely places that migrants would find accommodation. Smaller towns in adjacent poor law unions such as: Longtown, Wigton, and Cockermouth, were struggling to cope in the 1840s as relief payments for the unemployed escalated. Even the small town of Allonby located a few miles north of Whitehaven, where the local economy was largely based around fishing and

³³ 1840 (220), *Report from Assistant Handloom Weavers' Commissioners*, Part V.

³⁴ J. C. F. Barnes, 'The trade union and radical activities of the Carlisle handloom weavers,' *TCWAAS, New Series*, 78, (1978), pp.149-61; W. Hutchinson, *History of the County of Cumberland* (Carlisle, 1794).

³⁵ R. Floud and Donald McCloskey, *The Economic History of Britain, 1700, Volume 2 1860-1939* (Cambridge, 1994), p.135.

³⁶ J. Godwin, 'Duke Street, Carlisle, a street of handloom weavers', *TCWAAS, Series III*, 53 (1978), pp. 225-38.

agriculture, had one in twelve of its household heads engaged in weaving in 1841 and was seriously affected by lack of work.³⁷ As the industry wound down Carlisle and a few of these smaller towns hung on. In Penrith, thirty miles south of Carlisle, where the spinning of cotton yarn had declined dramatically, there were still about 100 handloom weavers who now received their spun cotton yarn direct from Carlisle manufacturers when there was a surplus of the product.³⁸ This continued to provide domestic work for men, women and children as ‘out-workers’ for the big manufacturers, but by 1848, as economic depression across the country became more severe, the fortunes of the handloom weavers had approached crisis point as one Carlisle newspaper reported:

Nearly the whole of the handloom weavers at Penrith are out of work, and in consequence the applications for casual relief at the Board of Guardians have been unusually numerous. Indeed, at that place a large number of agricultural and other labourers are out of employment.³⁹

Here, the suffering of a large proportion of the workforce had the Guardians’ attention, who had to take account of weavers as well as labourers.⁴⁰

To look more closely into where the Irish and Scots workers lived, a survey of the known ‘weaving streets’ in Carlisle was undertaken, using the 1851 census. Domestic handloom weaving and spinning in Carlisle in 1851 accounted for 2,171 (12.4%) individuals in a labour force of 17,574. Of these, 13.7% were Irish, and 14.3% Scots, a significant proportion in this sector of the economy (Figure 6.2 and Appendix Table 6.6). In addition to these workers in the city limits there were outlying villages in the townships of Brampton and Dalston that provided significant additional labour for industrial output (Table 6.9).

³⁷ J. D. Marshall and John K. Walton, *The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century* (Manchester, 1981), p.10-11.

³⁸ J. Barnes, ‘The trade union’, CWAAS, p.171.

³⁹ *Carlisle Patriot*, 25 Feb 1848.

⁴⁰ CRO, *Minutes of the Carlisle Poor Law Union*, February 1848.

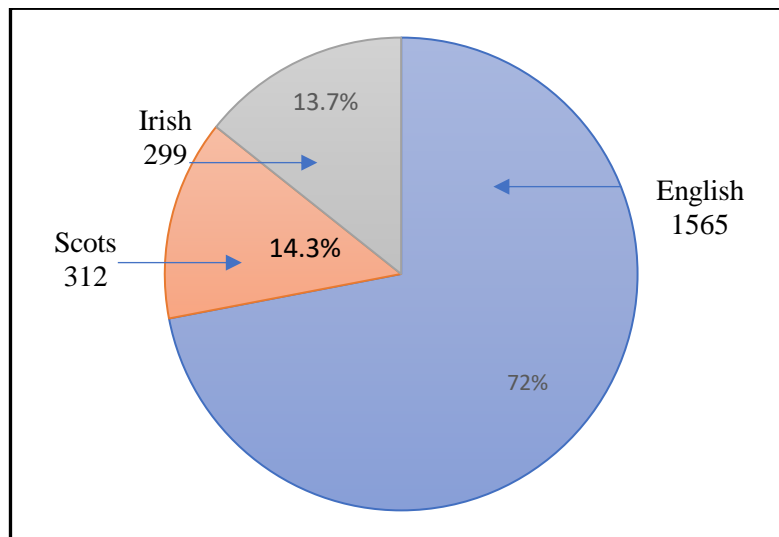


Figure 6.2. English, Scots and Irish weavers and spinners in Carlisle, 1851.

These weavers and spinners represented just under 10% of the total workforce of 5,698 persons but the Irish and Scots-born weavers and spinners in these localities were relatively few in number at 65 which represented by only 2.3% of the total, an under representation of migrants when compared with the overall numbers in Cumberland of 4.5%.⁴¹ Furthermore, these findings undermine to some degree, Geoffrey Timmins statement that ‘in every cotton town except in Manchester, they did not form more than a small proportion of the population’.⁴² Although his examination of the 1851 census for the Blackburn area revealed only ‘few people of Irish origin and none in hand weaving’, he was persuaded that this was the pattern for other areas but 13.7% Irish-born in Carlisle was far more than a few.

Crucially, women, as wives of the head of the household, were often unclassified by the census enumerator. Reference to their identity was various: ‘wife’; ‘wife of handloom weaver’; ‘cotton spinner’s wife’; ‘wife of the above’; or simply left blank. There was some classification of such women as ‘bobbin winders’ in domestic occupations, as distinct from employment in the Mill, and these evidently indicated their vital assistance in the domestic setting and were counted as contributing to the domestic economy.⁴³ Moreover they undoubtedly helped with the weaving process, as did the children.

⁴¹ J. D. Marshall and J. K. Walton, *The Lake Counties*, p.85.

⁴² Geoffrey Timmins, *The Last Shift, The decline of handloom weaving in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (Manchester, 1993), p163. [To qualify this quote, he could have been referring exclusively to Lancashire towns rather than ‘every cotton town’].

⁴³ Classifications: Children were recorded when less than 14 years old and frequently identified as ‘Scholar’; there was occasional employment of children in the Mill at 9-13 years; bobbin winders were invariably women, children, old men or invalids.

The main area of settlement of the weavers in Carlisle was along the banks of the River Caldew on the western side of the city adjacent to the main weaving centre of factory work. This was not only geographically separate, but where Irish and Scots migrants found cheap accommodation often in dire poverty and overcrowded housing. When the Carlisle police force entered the area on one occasion they met with serious resistance from the Irish, Scotch and other weavers who were so 'unused to the interference of an effective police force, that it was necessary to call in the aid of the military and 150 Special constables'.⁴⁴ This serves to underline the reactive behaviour of the police in the long history of social and political conflict in the city.⁴⁵ To follow the fortunes of the impoverished Irish and Scots migrants, this area, labelled Caldewgate, was focused on as a district where the reports of Robert Rawlinson, the government Sanitary Inspector, recorded some of the worst levels of poverty. He estimated that 9-10,000 persons resided in lanes, courts and alleys between the principle and secondary streets:

The Lanes and Courts are in the most objectionable state, containing almost invariably pigsties, open privies, dunghills, stagnate pools, the receptacles of every kind of filth; all of which nuisances remain unheeded for weeks or months together.⁴⁶

The map illustrates the nature of the dwellings crammed into the smallest possible area with minimal open space between the lanes and courts which accommodated the basic needs of the inhabitants. The conditions described here had been the subject of inspections and attempted regulation since Rawlinson made his first reports in the 1840s in towns like Whitehaven. As we saw in the previous chapter, the authorities were reluctant to take on the costs and responsibility required to implement the suggested improvements. The poor were still perceived as the victims of circumstances they generated for themselves, and the idea of spending huge sums of money on improving their lot was not considered to make financial sense for the ratepayer or the government who would have to provide long-term loan facilities to the local authorities to make Rawlinson's proposals possible.

⁴⁴ W. Parson and W. White, *History, Directory and Gazetteer of Counties of Cumberland and Westmorland* (1829); *Carlisle Journal*, 29 December 1826.

⁴⁵ Katrina Navickas, 'Captain Swing in the North', p.8.

⁴⁶ R. Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, and Supply of water and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the City of Carlisle in the County of Cumberland* (London, 1850), p.55.

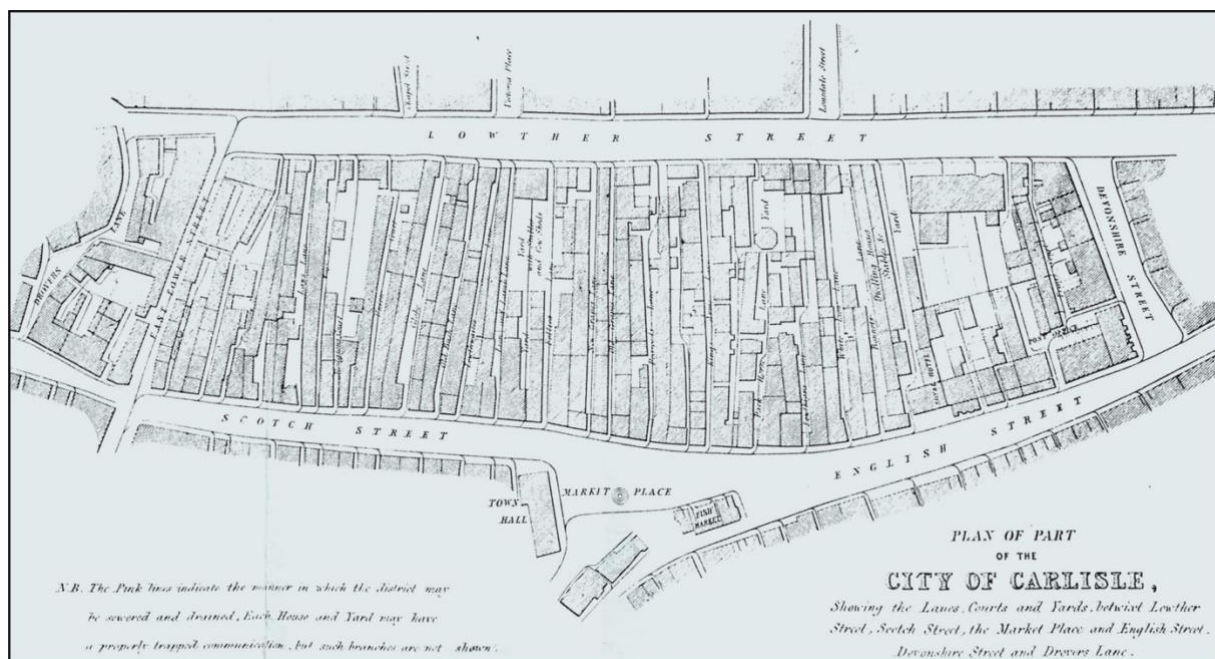


Figure 6.3: Carlisle city centre lanes and courts.⁴⁷

6 (iii) *Caldewgate: the home of weavers and spinners*

Caldewgate housed around a quarter of the city's population, which contained by far the largest number of Irish and Scots textile workers. Of these the Irish accounted for 10.6% and the Scots 12.1%. There was further labour power to be found in the number of female mill workers and the wives of male weavers and spinners, which added a further 1580 individuals to the labour force. Of these the Bobbin winders were the most significant group in both the home (363 workers) and the mills (494 workers). Furthermore, the Irish and Scots born in these categories came to just over 50% of the total. Donald MacRaild commented that, 'The overall picture of Irish household size in Cumbria suggests that they were as big, and larger than those found in the heart of the Lancashire cotton industry centres such as Manchester and Liverpool'.⁴⁸ Was this true further north in the Cumberland capital of Carlisle?

⁴⁷ CRO, *Report to the General Board of Health on the Sanitary State of Carlisle, 1850*.

⁴⁸ D. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration in Cumbria: The Irish in Victorian Culture* (Liverpool, 1998), pp. 54-5.



Figure 6.4: Caldewgate area between River Caldew and railway line⁴⁹

To measure this feature of migrants' lives in the eight districts, the data from the census enumerators records of Caldewgate were tabulated as shown in Appendix: Tables 6.1, 6.2. Only those reported as being born in Ireland were recorded as Irish. Children born in England, which could be as high as 50% of the totals recorded, were considered English. This makes any analysis of the population figures as no more than a good estimate. In recording the numbers of occupants in a single house they were classified according to the first head of household recorded as the 'principal head', i.e. the one who paid the rent to the house owner. For example: a house that had three heads of households with four members in each family where the first or principal head listed was Irish and the other two were English, then the house was specified as an Irish house with twelve members. There was always the possibility that the enumerator had recorded the principal head incorrectly of course.

Sharing a home with other families was common across all ethnic groups with a discernible preference by one ethnic group to share with another of the same. W. J. Lowe, in his study of the Lancashire Irish asserts that 'Irish families preferred to share a home with other Irish families if they had to share a home at all'.⁵⁰ Perhaps this was a measure of the

⁴⁹ CRO, *1853 Map of Carlisle*.

⁵⁰ W. J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire* (New York, 1989), p.54.

friendship and kinship networks by which relatives and friends from Ireland followed earlier emigrants to Lancashire and the far north, or even the reluctance of other families to share with Irish families. Whatever the reason it was a feature of family life in Carlisle with an average of 1.4 families sharing, as it was in Lowe's study of Lancashire where an average of 1.65 families shared accommodation. However, he painted a confusing picture when attempting to determine the probability of Irish and Non-Irish friends and kin residing with families and he provided no firm conclusions from his collected data.⁵¹

District No.	Population	No. of houses	No. of households	Ave. persons in each household	No. of Irish households	No. of Scots Households	No. of English households
1	990	166	185	5.4	21	16	129
2	1093	166	226	4.8	30	33	163
3	1107	192	241	4.6	34	22	185
4	1074	126	215	5.0	55	29	131
5	782	84	157	5.0	16	26	115
6	901	170	198	4.6	11	32	155
7	727	101	174	4.2	17	17	140
8	1014	155	218	4.7	24	35	159
Totals	7688	1160	1595	4.8 (Ave.)	208	210	1177
Percent					13.0%	13.2%	73.8%

Table 6.1: Carlisle, Caldewgate, households⁵²

The first thing to notice about Table 6.1 is that the household size in Caldewgate was noticeably smaller than that recorded in Whitehaven in the previous chapter. It varied between 4.2 and 5.7 persons per household (average 4.8 across the eight districts). In practical terms however, each house on average was occupied by nearly one and a half families which translates to a level of occupancy of 6.7 persons per house (4.8 x 1.4), compared to 7.9 persons for Whitehaven. The second thing is that Irish and Scots household heads represented almost identical proportions of the total number in the area: 13.0% Irish and 13.2% Scots. Lowe found that this figure for Lancashire Irish was even higher at 8.8 persons. For Liverpool, the figure was a striking 9.4 persons per household.⁵³ This indicates an over representation of migrants in Carlisle when compared with the migrant population across Cumberland (5.1%).

A different picture emerges when comparing the numbers of occupants of houses of the three ethnic groups as shown in Table 6.2. In the eight census districts of Caldewgate, district numbers 4 and 6 stand out as those with the highest concentrations of migrants where

⁵¹ Lowe, *Irish in Lancashire*, p.57.

⁵² *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books.*

⁵³ Lowe, *Irish in Lancashire*, p.64.

the Irish were the largest. Note that the average number across the ethnic groups ranged from English (lowest at 5.4 occupants), to Scots (5.9 occupants), to Irish (6.8 occupants).

District Number	English	Scots	Irish
1	4.6	4.6	6.3
2	4.6	4.7	5.4
3	4.8	5.0	5.4
4	6.3	8.0	9.8
5	4.5	4.9	5.4
6	6.8	7.7	8.6
7	6.0	6.7	6.8
8	5.2	5.4	6.3
Average	5.4	5.9	6.8

Table 6.2: Occupants of English, Scots and Irish households in the Caldewgate districts of Carlisle (also Figure 6.3 below)

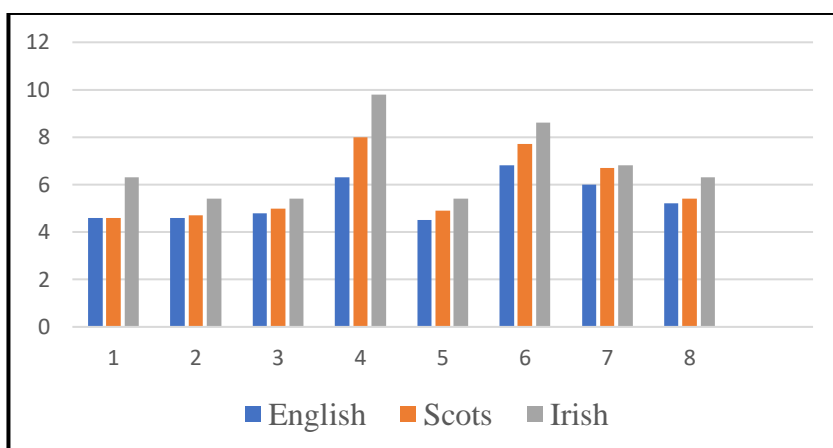


Figure 6.5: Occupants of English, Scots and Irish households in the Caldewgate districts of Carlisle.

W. J. Lowe's research in Liverpool established a comparable number of 9.4 occupants in Irish households, which is close to the highest value of 9.8 Irish occupants in District 4 in Caldewgate. There was therefore, a district in Carlisle where the population of 1,074, compared closely with Liverpool, the city in England renowned throughout the extant literature for its high concentration of migrant settlers in the mid-nineteenth century.

Having established that there were significant numbers of migrants in the area the question remains, was there any indication that the weaving industry attracted migrants as an accessible form of employment for the poor?

District No.	Population	Number of Irish weavers, spinners, winders	Number of Scots weavers, spinners, winders	Number of English weavers, spinners, winders	Total number of weavers, spinners, winders
1	990	24	8	134	166
2	1093	29	50	237	316
3	1107	24	35	220	279
4	1074	45	35	187	267
5	782	46	46	279	371
6	901	15	7	108	130
7	727	14	11	119	144
8	1014	28	66	363	457
Totals	7688	225	258	1647	2130
Percentages		10.6%	12.1%	77.3%	

Table 6.4: Carlisle, Caldewgate, Irish, Scots and English weavers, spinners and winders⁵⁴

Table 6.4 indicates the strength of migrants in the industry as 10.6% Irish and 12.1% Scots, the Scots having the greater share of the two groups. The combined total of 22.7 % (almost the same proportion as the number of Irish and Scots households referred to in Table 6.1) of weavers, spinners and winders in this category of work, also demonstrates clearly the scale of employment of migrants in this form of work in the poorest sector of society.

Lodgers, as added value to the family budget, provided fundamental support for poorer households. Lowe concluded that the taking of lodgers was much more prevalent in urban Lancashire than even the presence of the extended family⁵⁵. However, for migrant groups the dependence on supplementary income over and above the incoming family wage, which was down to four shillings per week, would have been welcome though it may not have been the only reason for the prevalence of lodgers in all households.⁵⁶ Irish outreach, as a characteristic strategy utilized by kith and kin, would have been employed to welcome their fellow nationals until they ‘got on their feet’. As such this may have been seen as a sensitive index of ‘communal cohesion’,⁵⁷ which enabled links with their homeland and those they had left behind, and was just as likely to be seen as mutual support as the expedience of economy so valuable for migrant families. On the other hand, it could be argued that large scale migration, such as occurred during the Famine, reduced the chances of families already in Britain being able to help newly-arrived friends and kin. Lowe claimed that ‘frequency of lodgers in households were an indicator of marginal

⁵⁴ *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators’ Books.*

⁵⁵ Lowe, *Irish in Lancashire*, p.58.

⁵⁶ (1845), *Second Report of the Commissioners for Enquiry into the State of the Large Towns and Populous Districts*, Appendix Part II, p.213.

⁵⁷ D. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict, and Migration*, p.55.

economic status amongst Irish families, representing compromises on living standards to stretch financial resources'.⁵⁸ This need not be true in all cases as this form of shared accommodation was no inconvenience to many and the 'extra cash' could have been simply that bit extra rather than an absolute necessity to stave off extreme poverty.

Finally, there was the question of economic advantage across the ethnic groups, which was gained from households taking lodgers into their home. Was this a particularly strong characteristic of Irish or Scots settlement? Table 6.5 indicates that it was. From the 1,614 households surveyed there were twice as many Irish lodgers as Scots and half as many Irish as the English. But the key to the relationships of frequency of lodger accommodation was in the ratio of lodgers to households for each ethnic group (Refer to Table 6.1 and Table 6.5). When using data from the census it is impossible to be sure, whether an individual's lodging was permanent or temporary. The tendency is to assume that it was temporary but it cannot be taken as any more than *prima facie* evidence of personal habit.

$$\frac{\text{Number of English lodgers}}{\text{Number of English households}} = 183/1177 \times 100 = 15.5\%$$

$$\frac{\text{Number of Scots lodgers}}{\text{Number of Scots households}} = 47/210 \times 100 = 22.4\%$$

$$\frac{\text{Number of Irish lodgers}}{\text{Number of Irish households}} = 93/208 \times 100 = 44.7\%$$

District No.	No. of house-holds	No. Irish lodgers	No. Scots lodgers	No. English lodgers	Total
1	185	5	2	13	20
2	226	0	4	23	27
3	241	9	6	33	48
4	215	47	6	24	77
5	157	11	9	19	39
6	198	0	5	10	15
7	174	3	2	16	21
8	218	18	13	45	76
Totals	1614	93	47	183	323
		28.8%	14.6%	56.6%	

Table 6.5: Number of lodgers in Caldewgate⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Lowe, *The Irish in Lancashire*, p.59.

⁵⁹ *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books.*

From the above it is clear that the Irish households in Carlisle were twice as likely to take lodgers than the Scots and three times as likely to take lodgers as the English, which aligns closely to Lowes findings.⁶⁰ All ethnic groups therefore relied to different degrees on the domestic weaving economy and placed significant reliance on lodgers as a form of income and tangible human support in the pursuit of their livelihoods. Lyne Hollen Lees concurred with this in her research on Irish poverty in different parts of the country when she pointed to wide variations but concluded that in general Irish households took more lodgers than English households.⁶¹

Commentators such as J. P. Kay, I. Duncan and Cornwall Lewis cited lodging houses, overcrowding and the miserable poverty experienced by the Irish workers. All were extracted from Cornwall Lewis' 1836 report on the *State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*⁶² in what appeared to be an attempt to emphasise the stereotype of the weavers' habitations as 'Irish', with all its popular derogatory connotation. According to Rawlinson in his report, two groups could be singled out who frequented common lodging houses (as distinguished from those households that took in one or two lodgers to live-in with the family), the handloom weavers and the vagrants.⁶³ He estimated that there were 360 men, women and children in these houses 'without any observance of decency'.⁶⁴ In the 1851 census there was little to corroborate this statement. In a survey of nineteen lodging houses in four streets; Botchergate, English Street, Scotch Street and East Tower Street (all included in Rawlinson's report), there were only eleven vagrants and 28 weavers recorded out of a total of 179 lodgers. Of these there were 98 English, 42 Scots and 44 Irish. The weavers evidently did not use common lodging houses as their favoured form of accommodation although 15.6% did. In summary, common lodging houses had high levels of occupancy: fourteen persons per household in the nineteen houses surveyed; 67% of the occupants were lodgers of which, 53% were English, 25% were Irish, and 22% Scots, all of whom used this cheap accommodation facility on a short or longer-term basis. There was therefore, reasonable justification to suppose that poor English migrants were as likely to be found in common lodging houses as Scots or Irish. The report made by Captain Hay on Common Lodging Houses in 1851 saw these living spaces as 'sources of streams of mendicants to all parts of the country, they are a refuge for them, and in many cases are the most infamous brothels'.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Lowe, *The Irish in Lancashire*, p.61.

⁶¹ Lyne Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers* (Cambridge, 1948), p.135.

⁶² 1835, *The State of the Irish in Great Britain*.

⁶³ 1845, *Report on the State of Large Towns*, pp.214-5.

⁶⁴ 1850, Rawlinson Report, p.56.

⁶⁵ 1852 (237), *Common Lodging House Act. Copy of a report made to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, by Captain Hay, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police*, p.1.

He goes on to say, almost to appease his previous remarks, ‘yet in these places are to be found industrious emigrant labourers with their wives and children, driven into them for want of other suitable shelter’.⁶⁶ There was a recognition here that all ethnic groups were equally in need of shelter when on the tramp seeking work, or even when forced out of work when employers laid off labour as trade declined. This comment would inevitably have included Irish and Scots as nightly lodgers as well as the English counted above. The report also contained several references to Irish lodgers in what appeared to be an effort to describe the worst state of some dwellings, for example: ‘a large room was found with from twenty to thirty men and women congregated (nearly all Irish), some drinking, others swearing and quarrelling, another set laughing and joking in the most obscene way’.⁶⁷ By way of contrast, and perhaps a glimmer of condescension, Captain Hay took pains to raise the question of morality amongst these inhabitants when he said, ‘Few, if any go to places of worship. The exception would be perhaps the Irish, who may be occasionally be seen hanging about the entrances of Roman-catholic chapels’.⁶⁸ How these sightings were obtained and recorded requires some imagination, but his understanding of church attendance (the cornerstone of morality in the nineteenth century) would have been limited. Hanging around the entrances to Roman-catholic chapels was probably designed to attract the attention of the priest to beg alms, a strategy in the armoury of the poverty stricken who had to rely on both public and private charity

6 (iv) *Poverty and pay*

The hand-loom weavers, whose *extreme privation* [my italics] has now become proverbial, are in a state of utter destitution. Spinners have had notice of a most sweeping reduction of 20-25%. Many have sold up and gone to America leaving their wives and children at the mercy of the New Poor Law.⁶⁹

This newspaper report in 1841 reiterated the proverbial maxim ‘extreme privation’ for those readers prepared to take notice. How many did so we will never know. Many Irish and Scots migrants did go to America, but perhaps more importantly, many stayed behind without the means to travel to such distant places. For them, it was the New Poor Law which they were subjected to, with its workhouse regime and its impact on the workers’ self-respect.

One district in the town where this privation was most evident was in that ‘nest of weavers to be found in Duke Street, Broadguards, Rigg Street and Queen Street’ in

⁶⁶ 1852 (237), *Common Lodging House Act*, p. 1.

⁶⁷ 1852 (237), *Common Lodging House Act*, p.13.

⁶⁸ 1852 (237), *Common Lodging House Act*, p.13.

⁶⁹ *Northern Star*, 5 June 1841.

Shaddongate'.⁷⁰ This was located in that part of Carlisle previously referred as Caldewgate where many existed on 'less than a shilling a day'.⁷¹ This social phenomenon, now ubiquitously referred to as 'the state of the poor' in Carlisle, was further addressed by the Mendicity Society, formed in January 1842, to devise means for their temporary relief. Their records for 1842 showed a total of 1,146 individuals who were completely destitute and 5,561 people who lived on less than three shillings or less per week, which was one quarter of the inhabitants of the city. The greatest proportion of these lived in the Caldewgate area.⁷² There was no shortage of evidence from witnesses in four major reports between 1842 and 1850 to corroborate this, but what was reported about the migrant population is the priority of interest for this study.⁷³ R. A Stanley, W. Kay, H.T. de la Beches and Dr Reid gave their reports and opinions about possible solutions. Reid drew no attention to the migrants in Carlisle and at this time (1827) one quarter of the city's population were unemployed Irish, although there were numerous references to others in the larger towns such as Birmingham, Leicester and London. Chadwick's report was by far the best and contained an extraordinary amount of empirical documentation about the economic condition of the urban labour force, in which the Irish were of some importance. Disease, mortality rates, housing and poor sanitation, were presented as the social ills of these growing towns. His proposals gave the civic leaders a blue print for the future if they were prepared to take the necessary steps to implement it but Whitehaven, as referred to in an earlier chapter, had not proved to be adept. Reasons for many of these social problems were put down to the waves of migrants and vagrants who moved into and through towns and their penchant for the lowest paid work and the meanest of accommodation. Wages were a crucial component of the 'pull effect' by drawing the migrant into the towns of the far north. When two to three times the wages were available in England, even at a time when the textile industry was in recession, the Irish and Scots weavers abandoned their native trade and took to the road in search of work.⁷⁴ Migrants from Dumfriesshire crossed the border into Cumberland and from Roxburghshire into Northumberland, and the Irish made the sea crossing from Ulster to Glasgow and Port

⁷⁰ *Carlisle Journal*, 28 April 1933.

⁷¹ *Carlisle Journal*, 1 January 1842.

⁷² *Douglas Jerold's Weekly Newspaper*, October 1846, in J. Barnes, p.62.

⁷³ 1840, *Report on the State of the dwellings of the Labouring Classes* (First Report, No. 24), *Cumberland, Durham, Northumberland and Westmorland, Political Tracts* (Sir John Walsham), p.1173; 1842, *Report on an Enquiry into the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, p.1172 (Edwin Chadwick); 1844 (602, 610), *Royal Commission for the Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts* (Montagu-Douglas Scott); 1845, *First and Second Reports, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices*; 1850, *Report to the General Board of Health on the City of Carlisle*, 1850 (R. Rawlinson).

⁷⁴ E. H. Hunt, *British Labour History, 1815-1914* (London, 1981), chapter 3, pp.57-116, for a comprehensive overview of wages and living standards.

Carlisle.⁷⁵ They were however unable to predict the descending trend of wage levels. The rate variation across the country, as testified by witnesses to the Select Committee, was in the range of four shillings to ten shillings in the towns of Manchester, Bolton, Leeds and Glasgow. Comparisons between Scots and Irish wage levels were examined almost entirely from the manufacturers' point of view but some evidence of the distress which they experienced occasionally surfaced.⁷⁶ This was an incredibly low income even in the 1840s where the lowest paid weavers were those in the south of Scotland and the border areas of the far north. The City Council of Carlisle in 1841 maintained that 'more than a quarter of the working class were unable to earn more than 1s 2d per week. The same, or nearly the same amount of pay, appears to have been received by the Scottish as by the Irish weavers'.⁷⁷ The greater proportion of these workers were handloom weavers and of these, 572 families had utilised the pawn shops, which were overflowing with the possessions of the weavers'.⁷⁸ This permanent decline in piece-rates and the family dependence upon it, as the powerloom came to dominate the industry, meant that no matter how industrious a weaver was, it was insufficient to provide enough for the basic essentials of life. That many died of starvation was unlikely, but what can be said with certainty is that many suffered the stress of insecurity and potential starvation as they fought to survive.

⁷⁵ A. Redford, *Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850* (Manchester 1926), Figs. 1-5.

⁷⁶ 1835 (341), *Report of the Select Committee on Handloom Weavers*, Q. 362-364.

⁷⁷ 1841 (296), *Report of the Commissioners on Handloom Weavers*, p.6.

⁷⁸ J. Barnes, 'The Trade Unions', *CWAAS*, XVI, p.159.



Figure 6.6: Notice posted in Carlisle, hand-loom weavers' distress⁷⁹

Further south the 'multitudes of Irish created some alarm in Manchester and Macclesfield, where it was said that there more Irish weavers than English'.⁸⁰ This 'news' would inevitably have seeped through to the newspapers and local leaders in the area who had the ever-present rate payers' concerns to take into account when considering the potential liability to make relief payments when the economy went into recession. But the attraction of better wages in England for the Irish as well as the Scots was sufficient to mobilise an army of workers who had no sense of recession, only the prospect of improvement in their lives. Witnesses testified to the influx of Irish weavers as linen manufacture declined with one who stated 'the great importation of Irish into the north west of England continues'. Another spoke forthrightly and said, 'it is the duty of the legislature to protect the weak

⁷⁹ CRO, SPC 44/8/2, *Notice of Meeting at Dalston School House*, 6 April 1840.

⁸⁰ 1840 (220), *Reports from Assistant Hand-loom Weavers Commissioners, Part III*, p.611.

from being oppressed by the strong; we are the weak, but the power-loom is strong; it takes from us our labour, but it does not contribute its share towards relieving the poverty it creates'.⁸¹ Richard Muggeridge, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, carried out a survey of the number of looms operating in 1840 in Carlisle and found that 1,963 were operated by 994 families, comprising 3,814 persons.⁸² This equates to two people employed for every loom rented, an indicator that wives, and children of weavers, would have certainly have been active in domestic employment. Five years later this had dropped by nearly 20% to 1,600 looms.⁸³

The question now was whether the Irish and Scots migrants had a significant impact and were they fundamental to the city's prosperity? Floud and McCloskey believed not and assert that they were never more than 8% of the British labour force.⁸⁴ This may have been true of the British workforce as a whole, but it was not true of the specific effects of migrants in towns such as Carlisle. The numbers in specific districts and in the city as a whole, were in excess of 8% and made an important contribution to Carlisle's industrial wealth (Table 6.6, Appendix). How they managed this can be deduced from the wages paid out to the producers of this wealth – the labour force. These were recorded by Muggeridge for the period 1800 to 1838. From 1800 onwards there was a steady decline from 30s 0d per week to 5s 6d per week in 1829.⁸⁵ The rates being paid at the heart of the industry in Lancashire, renowned at the time for its high wage levels, were less than half they had been a decade earlier in 1815.⁸⁶ Mr. McKenzie, witness for the Weavers Committee, provided a typical family income which indicated a one shilling shortfall on the means to survive on the absolute minimum expenditure of six shillings and six pence per week. From here on wages remained steady at this lower than subsistence level, an indication that the power loom had little effect as its usage steadily grew in following years. According to Muggeridge it was the influx of casual, unskilled labour into the market that was the reason for this decline and not the introduction of the power loom.⁸⁷ Redford disagreed with this argument when he said that the job of hand-loom weaving was becoming obsolete as power stepped in to replace the man in the form of the steam loom. He went on to say 'that as the English and Scots hand-loom weavers left the trade, or died out, their places were taken by low grade Irish labour at starvation rates of wages. In this way, the hand-loom weaving industry was

⁸¹ 1835 (341), *Report from Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers Petitions*, pp. 138, 230.

⁸² 1840 (220), *Report on the Condition of Handloom Weavers*, p.584.

⁸³ *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* (October, 1846).

⁸⁴ R. Floud and Denis McCloskey, *The Economic History of Britain Since 1700*, p.343-4.

⁸⁵ 1840 (220), *Report on the Condition of the handloom weavers*, p.392, in Sydney Towill, *Georgian and Victorian Carlisle* (Preston, 1996), p.80.

⁸⁶ D. Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, p.105.

⁸⁷ 1840 (220), *Report on the Condition of the handloom weavers*, p.604.

to drag out a parasitic existence for another generation'.⁸⁸ Champions of the weavers' cause were people such as John Maxwell who, he claimed with some justification, 'were forced in famished conditions to give their work at prices unnecessarily low, and utterly ruinous to the workman and his family through the reckless speculation of business and their local boards of trade'.⁸⁹

Despite the adopted resolutions to improve the situation for the weavers, and to resolve the hardships suffered by the Irish poor in particular, it was a further four years before the Assistant Handloom Weavers' Commissioners as the government body responsible for the weavers, reported on the means of alleviating their distress.⁹⁰ This was a remarkable delay considering the dependence of the economy on this section of the working class. It concluded that the amount of earnings of the great majority of were pitiful, and considering the evidence provided in graphic detail of the conditions of habitation in Carlisle and other places like Leeds, 'it would appear that they must starve or live on charity'.⁹¹ The full extent of the poverty and misery endured by the migrants was confirmed by the commission when it reported, but the two enquiries in 1835 and 1841 could neither agree on the cause, nor on its remedy.⁹² The commissioners dismissed their recommendations, which had taken the evidence of more than sixty witnesses, as nonsense and handloom weavers were encouraged to seek employment elsewhere. Much of the evidence had been retrieved from the 1839 Handloom Weavers Enquiry in order to substantiate the case for the condition of the 'poor Irish' rather than the 'poor Scots'.⁹³ After the leader of the Carlisle handloom weavers S. Hanson provided further evidence, recommendations were made by Nassau Senior in his 1841 report on the conditions of the hand-loom weavers that, 'the condition of the Irish, Scotch, and English hand-loom weavers, all engaged in the same business, at the same time and place (should) be compared and, if marked differences of condition should appear, those causes should be searched for'.⁹⁴ But this had little effect and no further report on these causes and conditions was ever produced. E. P. Thompson agreed in principle with the findings of the enquiry, but Duncan Bythell dismissed them in the same manner as the

⁸⁸ Arthur Redford, *Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850* (Manchester 1926), pp.130-3.

⁸⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, xxi, col. 1145-6 (5 March 1834), in Paul Richards, 'The State and Early Industrial Capitalism: the case for the handloom weavers', *Past and Present*, 83 (1979), p.95.

⁹⁰ 1841 (296), *Report of the Commissioners on Handloom Weavers*.

⁹¹ 1841 (296), *Report of the Commissioners on Handloom Weavers*, p.272.

⁹² 1835 (341), *Report from the Select Committee on Handloom Weavers' Petitions*, xiii; 1841 (296), *Report of the Commissioners on Handloom Weavers*.

⁹³ 1839, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Handloom Weavers*.

⁹⁴ 1841 (639), *Appendix to the Report of the Commissioners on the Condition of the hand-Loom Weavers*, p.130.

commissioners on the grounds that they selected facts to fit their purpose.⁹⁵ Richards made the most insightful assessment when he said that the handloom weavers were the victims of the capitalist economic process rather than the casualties of 'natural' economic forces. Most disturbing for the prospects of a more secure existence for the handloom weavers were the efforts of MPs such as John Maxwell who failed to generate sufficient backing to improve their condition.⁹⁶ Once again this labour force, amongst the poorest of the poor, were dismissed as an inevitable casualty of industrial development and economic progress.

The ease with which someone, particularly the Irish and Scots migrants, could move into the textile trade, was a bone of contention for the authorities who observed the Irish infiltration in different places. Again, the Muggeridge report records those such as J. Harper, a working linen weaver, who claimed that one of the principal causes which depressed handloom weaving was:

The facility with which a man could become a weaver. I was working at Barnsley two years ago, when the trade was brisk. One morning thirty Irishmen came in to the town, each proposed to become a weaver, they got friends and they got work. They had never worked as weavers before.⁹⁷

Such free and easy access to skills and employment for the Irish was no doubt exaggerated but what is probably true is that the time required to acquire the necessary skills was relatively short. This made the trade attractive for the migrant, many of whom would have had the most rudimentary command of literacy and numeracy, but also left them particularly vulnerable to exploitation at the expense of the local population who were equally keen to find employment. Harper went on to say:

...he had abundant testimony, as well as direct personal proof that a young person of either sex, of from 13 to 17 years of age, possesses the requisite physical capacity, and will, within a few weeks' practice, acquire the requisite skill to weave as well as the most robust and expert adult weaver.⁹⁸

The reason for making this point so firmly was almost certainly his attempt to make clear to the reader that the industry was easily accessed by anyone who cared to make it their livelihood, a feature which would have appealed to Irish and Scots migrants. The authorities were well aware that this was the case and used the time in institutions to good effect, 'three weeks were reckoned a sufficient length of time to teach a mere labourer, when committed for any offence to the New Bayley prison, to weave calico'.⁹⁹ Some workhouses did the

⁹⁵ Paul Richards, 'The state and early industrial capitalism: the case of the handloom weavers', *Past and Present*, May 1979, p.93.

⁹⁶ Paul Richards, 'The state and early industrial capitalism', p.114.

⁹⁷ 1835 (341), *Report from Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers Petitions*, p.39.

⁹⁸ 1835 (341), *Report from Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers Petitions*, p.39.

⁹⁹ *Manchester Exchange Herald*, 22 September 1818.

same as prisons by teaching inmates to weave in order that they had something to maintain themselves when they left the institution.¹⁰⁰ There is a range of opinion on this. Rather than undermining wage levels Lowe contended that the Irish, ‘as relatively cheap and highly mobile labour’, helped to sustain wage levels and differentials.¹⁰¹ E. H. Hunt does not suggest that wage levels were depressed by Irish migration, but, by sustaining wage differentials and possibly being a drag on their rise, the Irish may have been a ‘net liability’. Jeffrey Williamson’s model, which agrees with Hunt’s ideas, suggests that Irish migration, in the face of growing demand for labour, was never large enough, even in the hungry forties, to have a negative impact on wages and living standards of the poor by ‘crowding out the indigenous labour force.’¹⁰² But if internal migration was at its lowest at the same time as Irish immigration was at its highest as in the 1840s any crowding out would only have affected the low paid working-class wages.¹⁰³ The nuances of this theoretical approach to the economic effects on labour movement options for the employer continue to be debated, but suffice to say for this study that the migrant worker had an impact which at best maintained wage levels at their low level and at worst dragged them down to even lower levels than they would have been.

In 1847, that infamous year etched into Irish history by the effects of the famine catastrophe, the future did not look bright for the migrant weaver. The distress of the handloom weavers was heard by few in authority in Britain as the industry sank into decline on both sides of the Irish Sea:

The handloom weavers in Ireland were in a most destitute and distressed state. By weaving a web of fifty or sixty yards they could only earn 2s 6d to 3s per week and in many instances, they were sat up two or three nights of the week to feed their families.¹⁰⁴

The timing of the conjunction between this massive collapse in the wages of the textile workers and the famine catastrophe was indeed the greatest misfortune for the Irish labourers both in their homes and in the fields. But Hickson, chairman and commissioner, took pains to make clear that things were not as bad as they seemed:

...it is not what is earned by the man merely, but what are the collective earnings of the whole family; and this is more especially important in the case of weavers, because in almost all branches of weaving the labour of women and children is more available in the home than in other trades. His own

¹⁰⁰ *Manchester Mercury*, 18 May 1819.

¹⁰¹ W. J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire* (New York, 1989), p.96.

¹⁰² E. H. Hunt, *British Labour History, 1815-1914* (London, 1981), pp.300-1, 304; Jeffrey G. Williamson, ‘The impact of the Irish on British Labour Markets During the Industrial Revolution’, *The Journal of Economic History*, xlv, 3 (1986), pp.710, 713-17.

¹⁰³ Williamson, ‘The impact of the Irish’, p.696.

¹⁰⁴ *Carlisle Patriot*, 7 May 1847.

earnings may be but 7s., but, with the assistance of his wife and children, that 7s may be made 21s., and a factory girl will bring home to her father often much more than he earns himself.¹⁰⁵

These two contrasting approaches to the same problem are by very different authors: one an editor of a local newspaper and the other a government commissioner. On the one hand, there was a sense of empathy towards the plight of the weaver - low wages and long hours; on the other hand, there was a resistance to believe that the families of weavers were struggling to make ends meet - the income made by the family members was adequate to provide a sufficient and comfortable income. When the textile industry prospered the workers had managed, but even then, there was little left over to save for hard times. Furthermore, with no provision in the poor law for migrant workers, except the threat of resettlement to their legal home parish, they were forced to rely on whatever private charity or friends and kin could provide for them.

Five crucial weeks in Carlisle in February and March 1851 took their toll on these unfortunate people, which illustrated the severity of the human distress. On 14 Feb 1851, at a meeting of the magistrates, manufacturers and Poor Law Guardians the assembled beadles sought to alleviate the distress of the handloom weavers, and were reported in the local newspaper:

For several weeks past the handloom weavers of this city have been suffering great and increasing distress from the want of employment. The applications to the Board of Guardians have been weekly on the increase, but until last week no demonstration was made- the sufferers being buoyed up by the hope that the want of employment was merely temporary.¹⁰⁶

The trade had now declined to an enormous degree and workers were reduced to desperate poverty as wage reductions and short-time working in the cotton mills failed to provide sufficient income to feed the families. Support strategies in the city were hastily put in place in the form of soup kitchens to meet the growing demand of a penniless labour force:

A thousand quarts of the most excellent soup was too great a boon to be refused...and the committee at once made arrangements to see that it was properly distributed [during one week] amongst the most deserving of the necessitous poor. The relieving officers were required to recommend those they considered worthy of assistance. 125 persons will be supplied today with two quarts each'. 'There is scarcely any diminution in the numbers of poor men receiving relief [no women], A portion of the weavers have been employed in trenching a field belonging to Mr. Norman, others have been similarly engaged in other fields.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ 1840 (639), *Report on the condition of the hand-loom weavers*, p.12.

¹⁰⁶ *Carlisle Patriot*, 7 Feb 1851.

¹⁰⁷ *Carlisle Patriot*, 15 March 1851.

This long primary source reference can be justified for its measure of the public attitude and the censorious tone of the writer. Several conditions were applied to the soup's dispensation. The recipients had to be 'most deserving', 'necessitous', 'men', and most importantly provide an 'eligibility ticket' as proof of their genuine hunger and need. Few migrants would have been unable to fulfil this criterion, but despite these apparently unfavourable conditions, the Irish and Scots migrants continued to flow into Carlisle.¹⁰⁸

6 (v) *Female workers and the handloom industry*

The economy of the migrants' households would be seriously misunderstood without reference to the place women had occupied in the home; their earned income, and their perceived domestic and family duties. Any evaluation of gender issues needs to be just as rigorously applied as other criteria to provide an objective historical analysis. The report did much to set the tone for the development of attitudes, which became an intrinsic part of the English approach to the presence of migrants, particularly Irish migrants in England and Wales. Lewis collected a range of evidence from leading spokesmen (not women) around the country in his diligent efforts to produce a comprehensive document for all those dealing with the Irish problem.¹⁰⁹ Any reference to Irish women was associated with those elements of society most repugnant to the middle class such as prostitution, thieving, drunkenness and brawling. In the far north A. B. Reach, a social investigator made his contributions to the *Morning Chronicle* with consummate zeal as he wielded his pen with commentary on the Irish:

A woman, with skin so foul that she might have passed for a negress, was squatted on the ground; and a litter, I cannot call them a group, of children burrowed about her. The women could barely talk English, yet she must have been more than a dozen years in the country.¹¹⁰

This example demonstrates with particular clarity his effort to mark the difference between the Irish and the English. For Reach, the English poor were different, maintaining a certain dignity in adversity, characteristics that he felt were absent in the Irish. His attitude to women was especially repugnant.¹¹¹ It was six years later that Mayhew's rebuttal of this was published in which he said, 'With the Irish girls the case is different...they grow up to

¹⁰⁸ J. Donaldson, 'Mid-nineteenth century poverty in Dumfries', *Transactions of the Dumfries and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, Series III, 53 (1978), pp.147-56.

¹⁰⁹ 1836, *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*.

¹¹⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 6 December 1849, p.5.

¹¹¹ Donald MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain*, p.159.

womanhood in street-selling...their life is one of ‘street-celibacy’’, a term which Mayhew had invented to describe these women as chaste and without marriage ties.¹¹² It was W. E. Lowe’s research on the Irish in Lancashire that led him to conclude that, contrary to Mayhew’s assertions, arrest statistics in Lancashire indicate that Irish women were disproportionately involved in prostitution during the mid-nineteenth century. He emphasises that caution should be exercised when using his figures to make this point, as some women would have been arrested more than once and police sweeps in certain areas of known prostitutes would distort the figures. However, there were never less than 22% of women arrested who were Irish prostitutes in Manchester in the late 1840s.¹¹³

Women continued to flow into the area from a ravaged economy in Ireland. Several factors governed this influx: geographical proximity; employment prospects and much higher wages than in Ireland; young men who emigrated in large numbers reduced marriage prospects for women in their homeland; and most importantly, friends and kin connections of chain migration had given a degree of insurance against destitution.¹¹⁴ They were prepared to risk this journey of uncertainty with the hope of a better future. The prospect of an alternative life, and the coveted status of wife and mother in their own homes, made the risks worth taking.¹¹⁵ However, there were serious issues that women had to deal with. Destitution for migrant women was more of a threat than it was for migrant men. Poverty hit the widowed hardest with young children to support as well as deserted wives and unmarried single women with illegitimate children. Furthermore, property law entitled men to the property and assets generated in the marital term leaving their wives penniless if any such estrangement occurred. Women were less likely to marry and remarry than men and less able to support themselves through employment than men due to limited work opportunities. As already outlined in Chapter 3, little attention was given to the condition of those on the road, or to the numbers of women and children who accompanied male tramps. In general women provided the poor law authorities with additional headaches and a range of ideas about the way in which they colluded, connived and manipulated the system for their own ends.¹¹⁶ A range of opinions of the men who had control of migrant women’s destiny can be

¹¹² Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1851), p.448.

¹¹³ W. E. Lowe, *The Irish in Lancashire* (New York, 1989), pp102-3.

¹¹⁴ Ginswick, *Labour and the Poor in England and Wales: 1948-1851* (London, 1983), p.154.

¹¹⁵ Janet Nolan, ‘The Great famine and women’s emigration from Ireland’, in M. Crawford, *The Hungry Stream, Essays on Emigration and Famine* (Belfast, 1997), p.64.

¹¹⁶ 1836, *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain, Appendix G*. [The following statements from: Mr. Redfern, Prison-keeper and Deputy Constable of Birmingham, ‘The Irish are not so dishonest as the English of the same class, but more riotous when drunk’, p. xx; Mr. Whitty, Superintendent of the Watch of Liverpool, ‘Aggravated assaults are frequent among them...arising from sudden provocation or drink. I never knew an Irish row in which women were not concerned’; Mr. Barrett, Gaoler and Superintendent of the Police of Stockport, ‘Fights are principally among the Irish of different parties ... the women are very often involved

alluded to but perhaps the most pernicious effect of the cultural norms of society during this period was the necessity for women to demonstrate not only extreme need, but also virtue, independence, and a lack of ties to people with suspect morality.¹¹⁷ For some Irish women the ultimate shame and last resort in times of extreme hardship and distress would have been the workhouse, where they were dressed according to their status: yellow dresses for prostitutes, red dresses for single pregnant women.¹¹⁸ Maxine Berg argues that the major source of labour in the early nineteenth century for domestic industry were the women and children of the family.¹¹⁹ In Carlisle, even in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, there was a demand for the family capacity to work and the local newspapers carried advertisements for labour: ‘10 mule spinners, a card master, 2 rovers, and a few large useful families required’.¹²⁰ The family as a whole was therefore at the front line as the shared income generator in the textile industry as it gathered momentum in the boom years of the 1830s. The capacity of the industry by then, had expanded to 1,963 looms, of which 813 were worked by children which provided some notion of the magnitude of dependence on child labour. The census records for 1841 and 1851 provide some detail of employment descriptions, which serve as a guide to the dual or even triple nature of income derived from several trades. It is important to keep in mind the fact that those without steady employment probably told the enumerators what they did when they were actually working and if they were unemployed at the time it may or may not have been recorded. Weaving was therefore hugely important in the provision of a family-based form of work in which husband, wife and children all participated.

Allocations of gender for work activities of women revealed significant findings in the statistics for the workforce across the city. In the seven areas examined, 3,489 (19.8%) were working in the textile trades, excluding those designated as ‘wives of weavers’, some of whom may have been working on looms in the home (Table 6.7, Appendix). More importantly, women accounted for 47.8% - almost half, which is a startling figure when assumptions so far have alluded to men as the ‘bread winners’ in the weavers’ households. Bythell pointed out that ‘women *may* [my italics] have comprised half the total weavers, and

in these encounters’, p. xxi; Mr. John Watson, Superintendent of the Police of Glasgow, ‘Of the person taken up for being drunk and disorderly, more than half are Irish men and women. There is also a great deal of prostitution among the low Irish. Among the young prostitutes there are more Irish than Scots’, p. xxi; Mr. Parlour, Superintendent of the Police of Liverpool, ‘There is a great deal of pilfering among the Irish; many Irish women send children out to steal, and maintain them for the purpose of thieving’, p. xxii].

¹¹⁷ Glen Matthews, ‘The search for a cure for Vagrancy in Worcestershire 1870-1920’, *Midland History*, 11 (1996), pp.100-116.

¹¹⁸ 1834, RCLP, Appendix A, p.512.

¹¹⁹ M. Berg, ‘Women’s work, mechanisation and the early phases of industrialisation in England’, in *The Historical Meanings of Work* (ed.) Patrick Joyce (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 64-98.

¹²⁰ *Carlisle Journal*, 27 January 1816.

as many as 75% in some areas', but even though this amounted to no more than an 'educated guess' it was evidently accurate for Carlisle's female population.¹²¹ Caldewgate was the area where the highest concentration of female weavers and spinners lived.¹²² Here there were 1,309 weavers and spinners (Table 6.7) of whom 410 (19.2%) were women made up of the three ethnic group proportions which were: 58 Irish women (14.1%), 66 Scots women (16.1%), and 286 English women (69.8%)¹²³. Traditionally spinning has generally been perceived as the dominant female occupation, but this perception did not apply in Carlisle as the evidence in the census figures revealed that the proportion of male spinners and weavers was around two thirds of the totals at 62% and 68% respectively which was by far the largest proportion (Table 6.7, Appendix). It was this elastic nature of the female labour pool, with its almost unlimited numbers, who could be hired or laid off as the employers' order book expanded and contracted without any capital loss, which provided a major comparative advantage in the overall business management of the trade, championed by protestors in their campaign for better wages and conditions.

6 (vi) *Conclusion*

In this chapter census records have been used to undertake detailed analysis of the circumstances of migrants living in Carlisle. These were some of the poorest people in the community. The data enabled a close investigation of families who lived together in often crowded conditions across the age range in rooms hardly big enough for a fraction of the numbers. What the personal dynamics of such an existence is hard to imagine, particularly when the inadequacy of income to maintain the bare necessities is considered. By the time the powerloom was introduced in the 1820s there were around 5000 families dependent on domestic spinning and weaving in Carlisle. This represents less than 2% of the overall numbers in Bythell's cumulative assessment of 225,000 across the country for 1820.¹²⁴

The textile industry in Carlisle relied heavily on the Irish and Scots migrant population as an essential element of the labour options for both male and female workers. All weavers and spinners, including the English, lived in poor housing, and in general were seriously unhealthy. The wretchedness of the impoverished migrant permeates this chapter but the focus of government officials was on morals and lifestyle of the poor rather than the basic needs of the people so affected. They were outspoken in their preference for an English labour force, but morality and profit were irreconcilable and employers actively encouraged

¹²¹ D. Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, pp. 60-62.

¹²² Table 6.5, Appendix.

¹²³ Table 6.6, Appendix.

¹²⁴ 1826-7 (550), vi, Q. 2831; D. Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, p.53.

Irish and Scots migrants at the lowest wage rates possible. Duncan Bythell argued that poverty was endemic in the textile trade both before and after the mechanisation of the industry and was heavily dependent on Irish and Scots migrant labour who formed a 'true reserve of labour available for work when the factories were fully occupied' in the 1830s.¹²⁵

Women were a crucial component of the labour force and essential contributors to the household economy. Despite their lack of recognition by the census enumerators they accounted for just over half of the Irish workers in the trade across the city and surprisingly men were found to be employed as the large majority of spinners in the Caldewgate area in what was considered to be a traditional female role. Bythell made a tentative estimate of the proportion of females in the trade as 'half or as many as 75% in some areas' which was close to the actual situation in Carlisle. Caldewgate, as the centre of the textile industry in Carlisle provided accommodation for 26% of the Irish and Scots migrants. In this area home sharing between two or more families was common. This feature in one district of Carlisle was found to have been almost identical to that which W. H. Lowe found in Liverpool where the average number of persons was 9.7. The family size of ethnic groups in the Caldewgate area, that 'nest of weavers and spinners' referred to the *Carlisle Journal* in 1833, indicated equal numbers of Irish and Scots households, which was almost proportionately identical to the number of textile workers in each group.

There was a propensity to find space for lodgers in the household to make ends meet in the make-shift economy. When the ratio of lodgers to households of all ethnic groups was examined it was found that this form of household income supplement was adopted by all groups. The strongest corroboration of this form of income supplement was by the Irish households who were twice as likely to take lodgers than the Scots and three times as likely as the English, which concurred with Lowe's findings in Lancashire. Lowe took his research even further to confirm that lodgers were even more prevalent than the presence of extended family. The Irish migrants' characteristic outreach to friends and kin on the lookout for accommodation on arrival was probably responsible, at least in part, for the evidence revealed in the data, which provided further evidence of what MacRaild called 'communal cohesion' elsewhere in Cumberland. Weavers may have used common lodging houses as the cheapest form of accommodation but they were in limited numbers of which approximately half were English, and the other half divided between Irish and Scots.

As the trade declined and wages sank to unsustainable levels, labour became cheap and disposable and according to Redford the Irish worker stepped in on starvation wages

¹²⁵ J. H. Clapham, *The Early Railway Age, 1820-1850* (London, 1962), p.557.

as the English and Scots left the trade.¹²⁶ The wage collapse found many in the queue at the soup kitchen as the last resort in their survival strategy. If the conditions of dispensation of this life saving charity were unfulfilled the workhouse provided the only hope of food and shelter.

The rate of change from the handloom to the power loom accelerated through the 1840s and 1850s and as a consequence the available labour pool increased as redundant workers searched for alternative employment. Ironically this acted as a buffer to the handloom's demise and helped to withstand the mechanisation effect by the continuation of 'putting-out' work at the very lowest of wage levels, until well beyond the period of this study. Some manufacturers continued with putting out to the handloom and even abandoning the powerloom and reverting to the old system. After all the power loom was incapable of producing the quality of finished product until the late 1830s that the handloom was renowned for.¹²⁷ Prior to 1770s the cotton handloom weavers as a body had not existed, by the 1830s it was a major source of income for the domestic economy of migrants, by the late 1840s it was in terminal decline.

¹²⁶ A. Redford, *Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850* (Manchester 1964), p.152.

¹²⁷ D. Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, p. 81.

Conclusion

The dominant theme running throughout the thesis is a fusion of the lives, identity and survival strategies of the Scots and Irish poor in the region who had travelled outside of their country of legal settlement. The discussion considered the influence of the Poor Law before and after 1834, in addressing the regional problem of poverty in the patterns of settlement they adopted. It then addressed the way local and national governing bodies tackled the question of migrant poverty in its various guises such as: as homelessness and vagrancy; the 'offensiveness' of immorality; and unemployment. Finally, the work explores the often variable and evolving concept of poverty as it applied to Scots and Irish in the region. The idea of inter and intra-regional diversity frames much of the discussion.¹ By considering these different ways of determining how the Irish and Scots poor lived in the region the separate chapters provided some answers to the research questions.

The settlement of migrants, and often their removal from locations throughout the region, provided opportunities to measure the problems that the authorities encountered and the steps they took to control the situation. When the famine catastrophe struck in the 1840s those wandering in search of employment, commonly referred to as 'vagrants', were under constant threat from the police and a hostile public. Where they stayed, how they travelled, and the myths that were generated to describe and understand their place in society, are essential elements of this study. It was in towns like Whitehaven that public perception of the migrants' lifestyle was formed when poor housing conditions and poverty were cited as generally an 'Irish condition'. The extent to which the Irish formed ghettos, a concept which was analysed and tested in the town by addressing the extant literature and commonly held perceptions with reference to the housing conditions, occupancy levels and comparisons across the three ethnic groups (English, Scots and Irish). Finally, as it was the dominant form of employment for many migrants, the textile trade was used as a means of linking and comparing the poverty levels of the migrants with the host population. Unemployment on a temporary or permanent basis was readily equated with the poverty of this working-class group as those at the lowest level of income coming from a mainly agricultural background.

¹ Amongst the many references in the thesis see: Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850* (Manchester, 2000); G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People* (London, 1949); William Booth, *In Darkest England and the way out* (London, 1890, repr. Champaign, Project Gutenberg, 2000); Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the Poor, 1861-2* (Oxford, 2010); C.J. Ribton-Turner, *A History of Vagrants and Beggars and Begging* (London, 1887, repr. USA, 1972); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (London, 1984); Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers, the English Poor Laws and the People: 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998); Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford, 1999), Chapter 4; Rachel Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in Late Victorian and Edwardian England', *English Historical Review*, 92, 362 (1977), p.73.

This group was able to find employment in all forms of manual work on the land or industry, in the home and in the factory. The Irish and Scots in textiles represented a significant proportion of the population and were considered ideally suited to the type of work available and were frequently in the category of the poorest of the poor.² These themes, and the questions they invited, offered opportunities for comparing and contrasting the characteristics of Scots and Irish migrants who had a common goal in seeking re-settlement in villages and the towns in the region. As the introduction suggested, the methodology adopted in the present study has been used by historians in the recent past for migrant groups within the defined region of the far north in limited way. Government reports, newspapers, census records and primary archival sources have been used in this thesis to analyse, map and quantify data through tables, figures and charts. These sources have been used here to define the history of migrant groups in diffuse areas of small towns and villages across a wide area rather than larger single towns and cities.

The originality of the work is dependent on both spatial and chronological characteristics, and both are utilised in the argument. The study shows that the far north was in many respects very distinctive, particularly in its geophysical characteristics. It mixed elements of both the pastoral and industrial north, being a mountainous and remote area that also witnessed the growth of industrial bases on the western and eastern fringes. In socio-economic terms, it was a form of economic buffer zone to Scotland and a significant point of entry, or trans-migration, for the Irish and the Scots. Moreover, its distance from the machinery of central government created a sense of independence that parish leaders adopted in their administration of the poor law. This is not to suggest a permanent continuum of negativity in the attitudes and approaches of the authorities who attempted to administer their respective spheres, but one of positive 'local legalism' characterised by decisions made by magistrates. The work therefore suggested that local decision-making was very important, regardless of national legislative conditions.

Large parts of the thesis rest on the careful collection of demographic data, not least from census. Despite weaknesses in such data, for example the tendency to undercount the female work activity, close attention to censuses allowed information to be collated with a meaningful outcome. The characteristics of English, Irish and Scots occupancy rates in Whitehaven and Cleator Moor made meticulous collection of this data worthwhile and allowed a picture to be developed of some overlapping of household size for different ethnic groups. The fact that there were English households equal to and larger in size than Irish

² Though the thesis recognises that the immigrants/Irish were able to find employment in all forms of manual work on the land or industry, in the home and in the factory.

households undermined the generally held belief that Irish households were larger than English.

As we have seen it was essential that the outcome of the research led to some degree of certainty about the existence of any general patterns across the region or the country. With this in mind, it was the differences between the costs of pauper administration in each ethnic group, whether generous or grudging; the variable rates of ethnic occupancy of dwellings in Whitehaven and Cleator Moor whether dominated by one group or another; the parochial approach to law enforcement, particularly when presented with Removal Orders by Boards of Guardians anxious to remove migrants from their parishes; that provided some tentative conclusions and, within the period analysed, provided a deeper understanding of the lives of the Irish and Scots poor. However, the important fact remains that the life experiences of migrants, which were scrutinised as far as possible with reference to original sources, relied on the testimony and records of those who managed and controlled them.

As a result of the new austerity of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, which aimed to illuminate out-door relief for all except the most deserving cases by substituting the workhouse as the only option, many non-settled Irish avoided the poor law altogether. A miserable situation to be in when the harsh realities of industrial depression meant employment was scarce and disease was rife. Nevertheless, some did apply for relief at the risk of removal to their home countries of Ireland or Scotland. Hardship, because of English settlement law, was commonplace for migrants who suffered as a result of exclusive disregard for their destitution as unsettled persons. For some however, the lack of coherent and consistent interpretation of the law led to a variety of outcomes and a more informed and tolerant approach in the form of a local legalism. It was the Northumberland magistrate Ralph Carr's ambiguous judgement that gave rise to such confusion when he condemned the practice of the removal of English labourers but condoned and reserved the right to apply the power of removal of the Irish. Press reports further exacerbated this ambiguity during the Famine crisis and demonstrated some sympathy for the plight of the families affected, but also provided a multitude of articles based on fear and loathing of the migrant population. Moreover, the continuum created by the legacy of the famine was ever-present in undermining the need to deal with the settlement laws which protected parishes from the full force of claims for relief by the migrant population.

The complexity of the historiography on the topic of legal settlement is well known but Snell brought clarity and rigour to his analysis of the parish and those who had the right

to 'belong', a basic concept which underpinned settlement law.³ Any lack of belonging, and the resultant legal exclusion of the migrant from the right to relief, appears to have been no deterrent to the Irish and Scots who made their way to the west Cumberland **ports**, either alone or with their families, in the search for work. Where the authorities failed was in their inability to understand their urgent need for work and with it the means of survival. What they saw were individuals who threatened their budgets with overspend and contaminated the environment that they considered suitable for *their* poor, not the poor of 'others'. Even so the demands incurred by the county authorities on the poor rate were undoubtedly small when compared to counties further south such as Lancashire. Attempts to recover removal costs however were far from straight forward for the border crossing towns and ports such as Whitehaven. Those individuals and families forced to re-enter Ireland had to fend for themselves, often in a strange town many miles from their legal place of settlement, a process which was seen to be cruel by some. Removal of Scots to Scotland was not as susceptible to malpractice or error and considerably less expensive. Ultimately, fear was the catalyst in the equation in which the different parties participated but impossible to measure within the uncertainty of the constraints that bound them in the laws of settlement and removal. Removal of individuals and families who had lived in Britain for many years was not uncommon, as the number of warrants issued by magistrates in Tynemouth proved. Moreover, women suffered disproportionately to men in the region, particularly when the law invoked 'suspension of their identity', when they married. Whitehaven and Carlisle, as towns on the front line of the removal process, watched from the sidelines as the 'removed' made their way to these crossing points to await their ultimate conveyance over the border. The press played their part by augmenting the tension surrounding the uncertainty of future spiraling costs and fraudulent practices in the conveyancing process, which may have affected the authorities' decision-making practice. Allusion to Irish criminality also emphasised the separateness of Irish paupers as criminals and undesirables.

One group that featured prominently in this study in each phase of its development were vagrants. For some they were synonymous with the migrant but essentially the terms meant different things to different people. Poverty in this form of migrant destitution has been explicit throughout the narrative and chapter 3 focussed on those individuals who were frequently driven into this condition for structural reasons such as: lack of settlement rights; famine in their homeland; and as redundant elements of localised industrial decline.

³ Keith D. M. Snell, *Parish and belonging: community, identity and welfare in England and Wales* (Cambridge, 2006).

Women's experiences as vagrants, as Roger Swift observed, were largely undocumented mainly because sources were scarce, which was certainly justified in the far north where relatively few sources were uncovered.⁴ Some evidence of the awareness of the failures of the system emerged at parish and local level, which pointed to reasons for the vagrants' condition other than criminality. Even so, the Poor Law Unions were particularly fearful of the increase of Irish vagrants on a 'Lancashire scale', and expressed alarm at the prospect of having to provide them with poor relief for an indefinite period.⁵ An analysis of the data provided some evidence to refute the assertion that Irish and Scots vagrancy was increasing, but there was a significant presence of Irish and Scots migrants who could be, and often were, classified as 'vagrants'.

The forced movement of the Irish poor as the Great Famine in Ireland took hold was met by the authorities in the ports on the west coast with some alarm, which translated into hostility on some occasions and on other occasions generosity. In practical terms, it had the effect of redirecting expenditure priorities to dealing with the crisis in Cumberland by putting any social improvement works on hold. The squalid and particularly over-crowded housing conditions in places like Carlisle and Whitehaven, became even worse as migrants sought shelter at the cheapest possible rates. Relief, in whatever form it was dispensed, was an immediate priority, but just as importantly it was the potential escalation of the problem that made the authorities nervous.

In the hope of escaping the poverty found in the west of the region, many of the Irish took to the trails eastwards to Tynemouth and Newcastle only to find little improvement. There was some evidence that attitudes to the migrant stranger were more amenable there than they were in the arrival ports in the west, but the sense that the Irish poor were being provided for at the expense of the English poor and that the undeserving were reaping the benefits reserved for the deserving was ever-present amongst rate-payers. Any smouldering embers of resentment were fanned by newspaper editors who picked up events in Liverpool, Manchester and London for re-print in the Carlisle press. Reprinted reports such as the letters of the *Morning Chronicle's* correspondent in 1850 were used as a yardstick for the potential development of disaster for the community if the authorities did not act decisively.

Any financial security on offer from men like the Whitehaven business man John Curwen, who provided a small insurance service to those who were considered worthy, included only those migrants who were in selected jobs, an effective way of excluding almost

⁴ Roger Swift, 'Identifying the Irish in Victorian Britain: Recent trends in Historiography', *Immigrants and Minorities* 27, 2-3 (2009), pp.134-151.

⁵ Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and Integration* (Cardiff, 2000), p.83.

all migrants and all those famine victims who had managed to make the journey. The limitations of the study were noticeable when efforts to unearth passenger lists for boat landings at Whitehaven during the famine period proved fruitless with only newspaper reports of approximate numbers who stepped onto the quay-side from Belfast or Dublin. This can be marked as a feature of the thesis which could be explored and researched in more depth and provides some scope for research through the Dublin and Belfast archive record offices.

In comparing the occupancy rates of the Irish and Scots in workhouses with other counties they were found to be relatively small which suggests they were already settled under the five-year rule or numbers may not have been significant enough for the authorities to have worried about so they turned a blind eye. In the short-term it was often easier to take them in, provide some food at minimal cost and send them on their way. Clearly, the Irish and Scots paupers were receiving relief from the authorities in workhouses across the country on both a casual and longer-term basis. However, Frank Neal's dominant and respected view on the subject, that there was a reluctance by the Irish migrants to appeal to the authorities for relief or medical help from the workhouse or the fever hospital because they feared removal back to Ireland, should not be ignored. The knowledge of the consequences of application for relief without legal settlement would have been a sufficient deterrent to many who were in urgent need of support.

Public health was a concern that cut cross all ethnic barriers. As poor rates rose, and the spread of epidemic disease began encroaching upon areas inhabited by the native population, sympathy for the plight of the Irish diminished despite that fact that many experienced acute distress and often died. The practical difficulties in seeking and obtaining medical help from the Dispensary in Carlisle referred to in the same chapter were more likely to have deterred migrants rather than the fear of removal, particularly if the problem was typhus related, with all its prejudicial fears for the host population. Furthermore, the mythical attitude of some in their attempts to define reasons for the disease must have been extremely unhelpful.

Local economies, and those who controlled work opportunities, made adjustments to accommodate these strangers in their midst by absorbing them as the population increased and discarding them when they called on the authorities for relief. Facilities were provided in the form of the workhouse, the pauper's last resort, to control any excess labour thrown on hard times. In Ireland and Scotland, the Poor Law failed to provide workable solutions to this growing labour force and the men appointed to manage it were loath to adjust to the changing economic scene. At the same time the press pandered to the public appetite for

prejudice and vilification of the alien migrant. However, structural reasons were finally acknowledged as a major cause of the ebb and flow of the economy which were revealed in periods of unemployment and hardship. It was the local parishes who bore the brunt of managing the numbers and steering a way over this rocky terrain.

Differences in spending on indoor paupers indicated that Northumberland spent twice as much per pauper as Cumberland and when compared with the southern counties selected for analysis, the regional spending of the far north proved to be far more generous. This was contrary to the findings of Steven King and J. M. Postgate and Raymond Cole who argued as we saw in chapter 3.⁶ Overall government spending on both in-door and out-door paupers was of course a national issue of concern and rising numbers and costs of relief for paupers in the workhouses resulted in a demand for information on long-term occupancy of workhouses. Research for this study revealed that 13.8% of these were in the far north and of these less than one per cent were Irish, but this did little to alleviate the perception of the migrant drain on public resources.

Criticism of common lodging houses by government inspectors focussed on sanitary and health issues but did not prevent them from alluding to the Irish poor in various reports. On this theme, Rawlinson found that Whitehaven stood head and shoulders above other inspected areas when he said that ‘they ranked with the better conditioned roomed tenements’.⁷ With limited options such as these to choose from the Irish and Scots poor frequently lived on the extreme margins of the lowest economic continuum. In chapter 5 the stereotypical conditions of the ‘ghetto’, so often referred to as an Irish problem were tested. No evidence of the ghetto phenomenon, as it had been traditionally defined, was found in Whitehaven. The hypothesis that the Irish dominated these sanitary, sometimes disease-ridden neighbourhoods could not be substantiated, although they could be identified as the principal occupants of some common lodging houses and in Cleator occupied some of the most densely populated houses. However, even the ‘worst’ houses in the ‘worst streets’ were not dominated by Irish households in Whitehaven in 1851. The findings showed that the Scots were thinly spread across Whitehaven and lived in similar conditions to the English and Irish but in smaller numbers. Furthermore, it was clear that the English, Irish and Scots poor in Whitehaven all lived in conditions similar to each other in the same area in shared housing and shared streets. For the purposes of this study we can conclude that this

⁶ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850* (Manchester, 2000); G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People* (London, 1949).

⁷ 1849, *A Report of the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water, and Sanitary Conditions of the Inhabitants of the Town of Whitehaven*, p.15.

demonstrated the existence of ‘poverty ghettos’, which were defined in chapter 5 as those areas where there was a significant problem of poverty exhibiting the conditions that Rawlinson found in his report. It was also made clear by a government report fourteen years later that housing in Whitehaven and other towns in this Union district were still not on the authority’s improvement agenda, and that the Irish who lived in some of these most neglected areas would continue to be impugned for their misperceived lifestyle. These conclusions have contributed to the knowledge of migrants’ occupancy patterns and overturned some commonly held misconceptions regarding ghettoisation of neighbourhoods.

As a major source of employment, the textile industry served as a ‘poverty-link’ across the three ethnic groups and enabled some comparisons and conclusions to be drawn. By the time of the introduction of the powerloom in the 1820s around 5000 families were dependent on domestic spinning and weaving in Carlisle, albeit a small fraction of the 225,000 across the country.⁸ The textile industry relied heavily on the Irish and Scots migrant population with 12.4% of its labour force working in the trade. All weavers and spinners, including the English, lived in poor housing, and in general were seriously unhealthy but the focus of government officials was on morals and lifestyle of the poor rather than the basic needs of the people so affected. Economic change in the industrial structure of the region was accommodated to some degree by the employers’ preference for an English labour force, but morality and profit were irreconcilable and employers actively encouraged Irish and Scots migrants at the lowest wage rates possible. To restate a comment by Duncan Bythell, which was demonstrated in the Carlisle home-based textile industry and cited in chapter 6, ‘Irish and Scots migrant labour formed a true reserve of labour available for work when the factories were fully occupied in the 1830s’.⁹ Women were a crucial component of this labour force and essential contributors to the household economy but surprisingly men were found to be employed as the large majority of spinners in the Caldewgate area in what was considered to be a traditionally female role. Bythell had made a tentative estimate of the proportion of females in the trade as ‘half or as many as 75% in some areas’ which was close to the proportion in Carlisle.

In Caldewgate, the centre of the textile industry in Carlisle, home sharing between two or more families was a common feature and concurred with W. H. Lowe’s findings in Lancashire. There was also a propensity to find space for lodgers in the household to make

⁸ 1826-7 (550), *Report of the Select Committee on Emigration*, vi, Q. 2831; D. Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers* (Cambridge, 1969), p.53.

⁹ J. H. Clapham, *The Early Railway Age, 1820-1850*, (London, 1962), p.557.

ends meet in the make-shift economy adopted by all groups. The strongest corroboration of this form of income supplement was by the Irish households who were twice as likely to take lodgers than the Scots and three times as likely as the English, which again concurred with Lowe's findings in Lancashire, a far larger urban area with high population density. The similarities between the manufacturing towns of Lancashire and the small town of Carlisle showed that there was a degree of demographic conformity in social behaviour that until now has been unrecognised. The Irish migrants' characteristic outreach to friends and kin on the lookout for accommodation on arrival was probably responsible, at least in part, for this in what Donald MacRaild called 'communal cohesion' elsewhere in Cumberland.¹⁰

There was a sense that Duncan Bythell's closing comments on the history of the handloom weavers sought to justify the poverty and the misery of most of society when he said, 'the public men probably did the best they could within the prevailing framework of ideas'.¹¹ He could have gone further and said that they accepted the unquestioned cultural norms of a male dominated class-conscious society which enabled them to manage and control Irish and Scots migrants with relative ease. Moreover, there was a picture of choice that emerged rather than obligation whereby Guardians decided upon one issue or another. Across the study these choices centred upon: building of workhouses; levels of expenditure on paupers; policy of removal (including the crucial famine period of the 1840s); implementation of strict control of vagrants under the delegated control of the police; and a refusal to accept the findings of the sanitary inspectors. In exploring the evidence and statistics, and in correcting or enhancing key existing works of historiography, all of which contributed to the overall picture of life for the migrant and the communities they inhabited, not one story from the hand of the Irish or the Scots poor emerged. To reiterate my statement in chapter 5, what is left to the historian are the stories of those who rejected them, counted them, controlled them and cared for them.

These individuals or groups may or may not have been aware of their separateness or alienation as Irish or Scots, but without their personal stories now lost in the shadows of history, writers on this topic will continue to have difficulty in understanding the complexity of their condition. To grin and bear the consequence of life in the meanest conditions in Whitehaven could have been just one element in their survival strategy and merely a step on their journey back to Ireland when they had the means to make it possible.

¹⁰ D. M. MacRaild, *Culture Conflict, and Migration*, p.55.

¹¹ D. Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, p. 272.

Appendices

Chapter 2

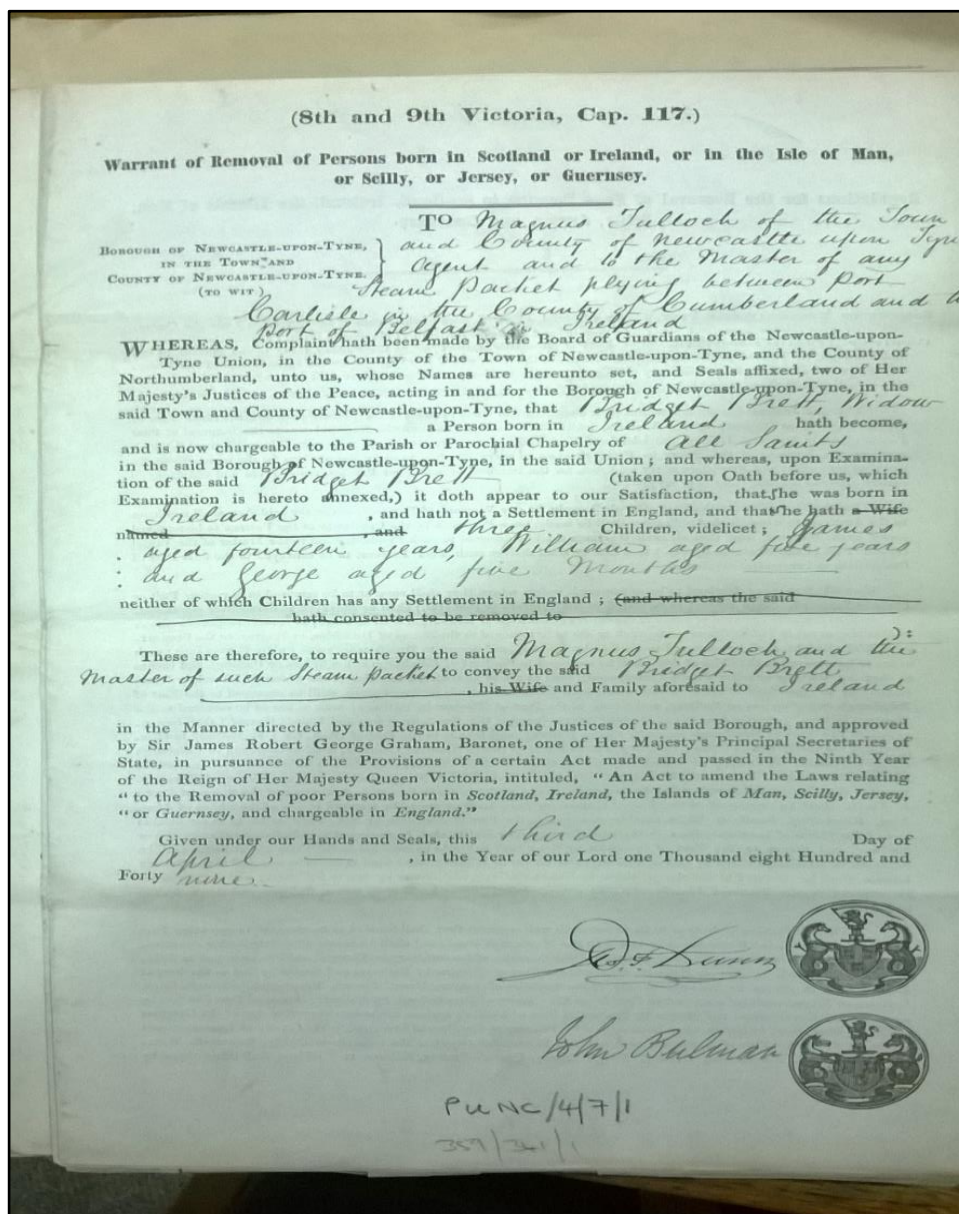


Figure 2.1: 'Warrant of Removal of Persons born in Scotland or Ireland or in the Isle of Man or Scilly or Jersey or Guernsey', 1849.¹²

¹² TWRO, PUNC/4/7/1.

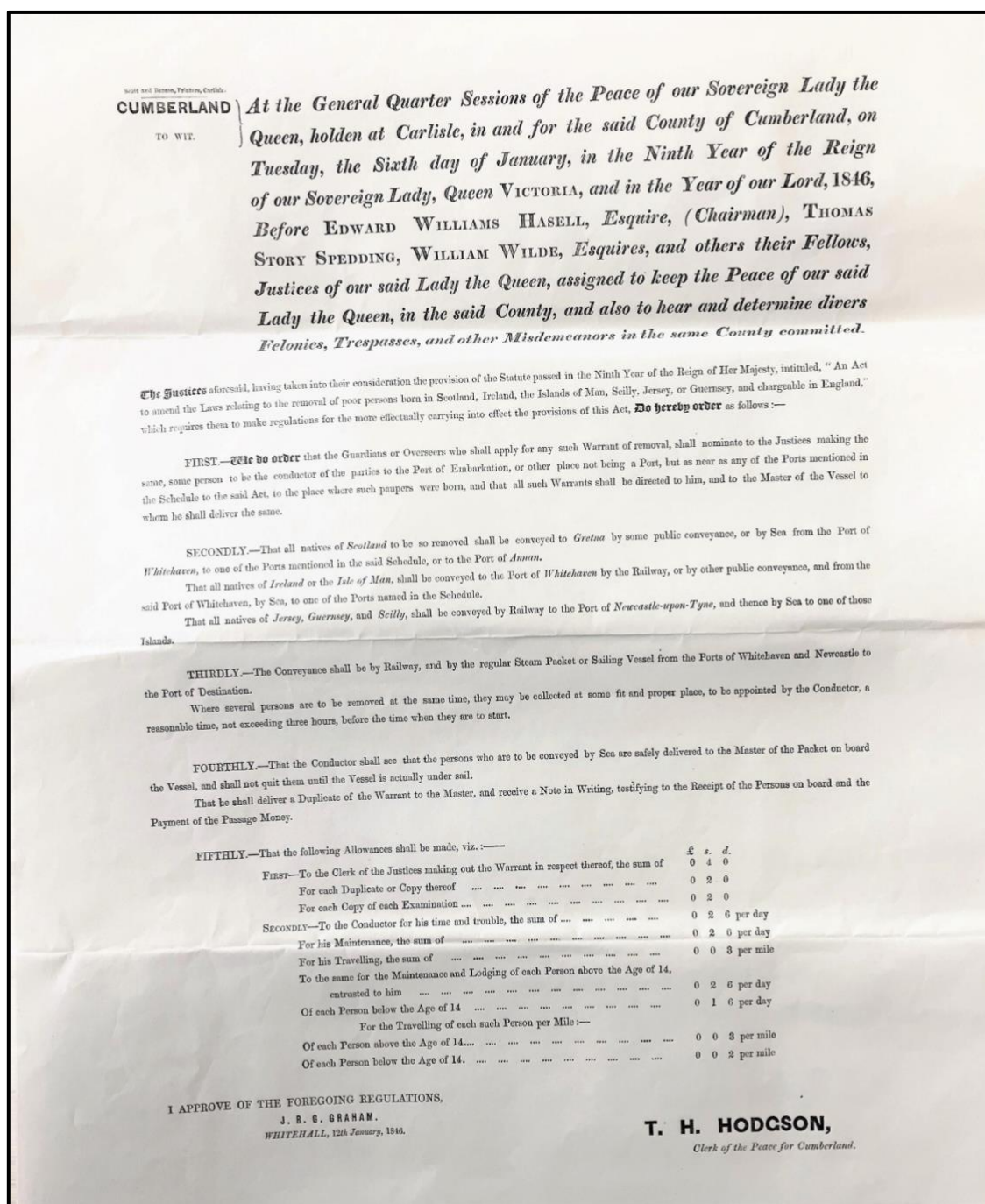


Figure 2.2: Regulations for administering removal orders, ports of embarkation and conveyancing allowances. relating to the removal of poor persons to Scotland, Ireland, The Isle of Man, Scilly, Jersey or Guernsey and chargeable in England', 1846.¹³

¹³ CRO, D/HOD/11/118.

Table 2.13: Removal Orders and Warrants for Removal in Tynemouth.¹⁴

No.	Date 1849	Name	Nationality (origin)	Accompanied by	Duration Of Stay (years)	Removal Route
1	3 Mar	Bridget Brett	Irish (C. Mayo)	James (14y), William (5y) George (5m)	9	Port Carlisle To Belfast
2	8 Mar	Mary Ann Cuthbertson	Scot Edinburgh	William (3)	2 ^{1/2}	Newcastle to Port Leith
3	20 Feb	Deborah Watson	Irish (Armagh)	James (9)	2	Port Carlisle to Belfast
4	3 Apr	Philip Murray	Irish (Monaghan)	-	4 months	Port Carlisle to Belfast
5	3 Apr	Catharine Donley	I (Tyrone)	-	1 ^{1/2}	Port Carlisle to Belfast
6	3 Apr	*James Marjee	I (Donegal)	-	33	Port Carlisle to Belfast
7	3 Apr	Timothy McCarthy	I (Corrie)	Wife Anne	7	Port Carlisle to Belfast
8	5 Apr	John Thompson	Scot Edinburgh	Wife Jane + Margaret (5)	3	Newcastle to Port Leith
9	1 May	Patrick McKay	Irish (Dublin)	Wife Bridget + Catherine (1) Thomas(3weeks)	6	Port Carlisle to Belfast
10	1 May	William Harman	Irish (Dublin)	-	-	Port Carlisle to Belfast
11	1 May	Mary Branman	Irish (Roscommon)	-	6 months	Port Carlisle to Belfast
12	1 May	Daniel McDonough	Irish	-	-	Port Carlisle to Belfast
13	25 May	John Henry	Scot	Wife Jane + Elizabeth (14) James (12)	27*	Newcastle to Port Leith
14	1 June	Sarah McCann	Scot Dumfries)	Illegitimate child 7 weeks (not named!)	-	Newcastle to Port Leith
15	1 June	Mary Irving	Scot (Dumfries)	Samuel (17) David (7) Mary (3)	10	Newcastle to Port Leith
16	12 June	James Quin	Irish (Tyrone)	No wife, 4 children Ellen (12) Rosanna (10) Mary (6) Margaret (4	6	Port Carlisle to Belfast
17	21 June	William Fraser	Scot	No wife, 3 children Hannah (9) Ann (6) Margaret (12)	26	Newcastle to Port Leith
18	18 July	Rebecca Kirkwood	Irish (Belfast)	-	2	Port Carlisle to Belfast

¹⁴ Tyne and Wear Record Office, PU/NC/4/7/1-3.

19	18 July	William McGraw	Irish (Tyrone)	-	1 ^{1/2}	Port Carlisle to Belfast
20	18 July	James McCairon	Irish (Belfast)	-	4	Port Carlisle to Belfast
21	18 July	Mary Fox	Irish (Belfast)	John (15) Thomas (9) James (4) Patrick (1 ^{1/2})	1	Port Carlisle to Belfast
22	18 July	Margaret Gray	Scot (Greenock)	Charles (2) Alexandra (2mths)	1 ^{1/2}	Newcastle to Port Leith
23	18 July	Mary Young	Irish	-	2 months	Port Carlisle to Belfast
24	18 July	Patrick Kelly	Irish (Derry)	Wife Ann	1 month	Port Carlisle to Belfast
25	2 Aug	Mary Jane Armstrong	Irish (Coleraine)	Robert (7) Jane (6) Archibald (5) Alexander (1 ^{1/2})	5 months	Port Carlisle to Belfast
26	25 Aug	Elizabeth McMurtrie	Scot	Elizabeth (3)	3	Newcastle to Port Leith
27	28 Aug	Luke Brannan	Irish (Roscommon)	-	1	Port Carlisle to Belfast
28	28 Aug	Sarah Donley	Irish (Tyrone)	Mary (3 months)	3	Port Carlisle to Belfast
29	28 Aug	Catherine O'Neal (Single woman)	Irish (Derry)	-	1 ^{1/2}	Port Carlisle to Belfast
30	28 Aug	John O'Neil (Misspelt on the warrant)	Irish (Armagh)	-	2	Port Carlisle to Belfast
31	28 Aug	Mary Kenna (Wife of John Kenna)	Irish (Tyrone)	-	3	Port Carlisle to Belfast
32	4 Sept	Jane Donnelly	Irish (Armagh)	-	4	Port Carlisle to Belfast
33	4 Sept	James Smith	Irish (Sligo)	-	12	Port Carlisle to Belfast
34	4 Sept	Thomas Ryan	Irish (Tipperary)	Wife Hannah Hannah (18)	13	Port Carlisle to Belfast
35	4 Sept	George Mulholland	Irish (Ballysconna)	Wife Ellen Mary (16), Robert (14), John (12) Isabella (8) Hugh (4)	3 months	Port Carlisle to Belfast
36	9 Oct	Bridget Cayla	Irish (Tyrone)	-	4 months	Port Carlisle to Belfast
37	9 Oct	Charles McQuoid	Irish (Tyrone)	-	6 months	Port Carlisle to Belfast
38	9 Oct	Elizabeth Ward	Irish (Tyrone)	Elizabeth (6) Mary (4) Rachel(1)	17	Port Carlisle to Belfast
39	9 Oct	James Ryan	Irish (C. Clare)	-	1	Port Carlisle to Belfast

Chapter 3

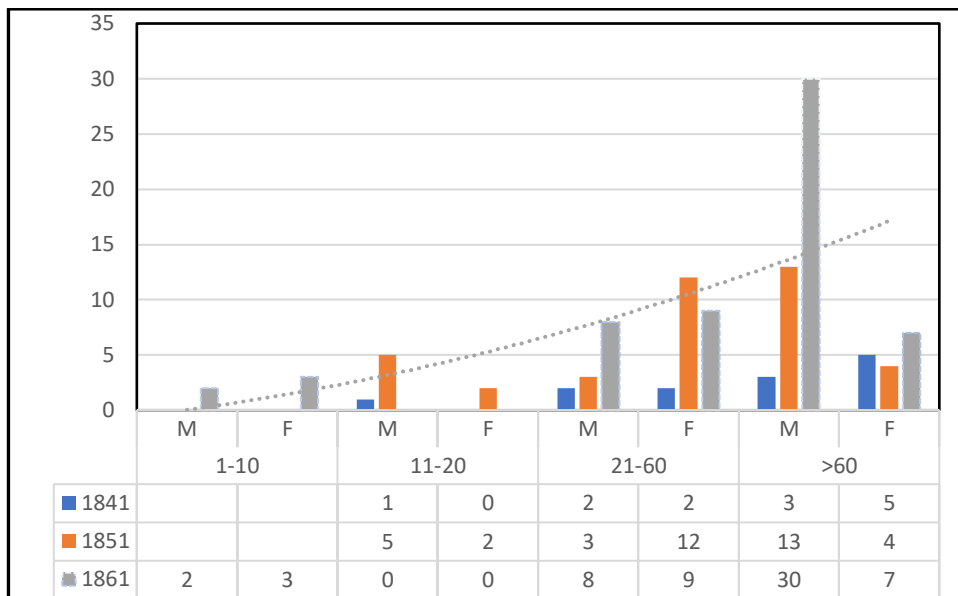


Figure 3.5: Age range of paupers in workhouses in Cumberland, 1841-61

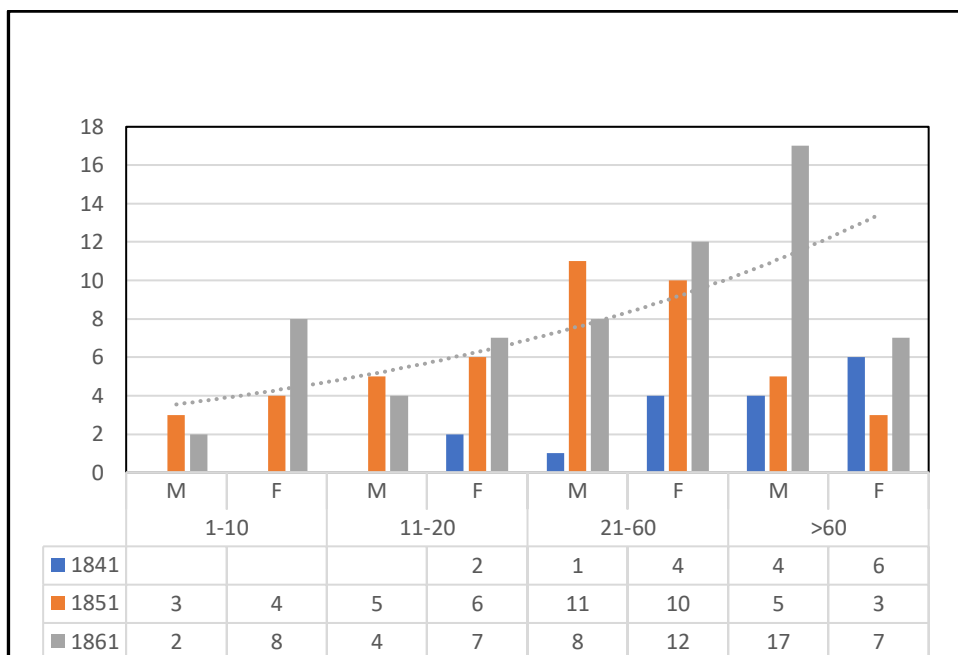


Figure 3.6: Age range of paupers in workhouses in Northumberland, 1841-61

1. No relief shall be given except at the VAGRANT OFFICE.
2. Every vagrant applying for relief to be examined and an accurate description registered. Such as shall not appear proper Objects, shall be proceeded against under the Vagrants Act.
3. Printed tickets shall be given to the inhabitants, who are requested to give them to the Vagrants instead of pecuniary relief, with instructions to proceed to the Vagrant Office.
4. All vagrants deemed proper Objects shall proceed to a designated place to rest themselves or remain all night.
5. Every Person, who shall knowingly suffer any Person to lodge in his or her house, who shall come within the Description of a *Rogue* and *Vagabond*, under the *Vagrant Act*, shall be proceeded against for the Penalty of *Forty Shillings*.
6. There will be no relief for Vagrants except by tickets.
7. Constables are to use every exertion to apprehend all Vagrants.
8. Magistrates are to be requested to issued search warrants when required to affect these resolutions.
9. Copies of these resolutions to be printed in the provincial newspapers

Figure 3.3: *Cumberland Pacquet*, Carlisle Dispensary Nine-Point Plan, 3 November 1811.

Names and Description of casual poor relief

Date	Names	Country	Sex	Age	Height	Weight	Complexion	Build	Other
1840	Edward Howard	1/2	120	210	5'4"	14	32		
July 1st	John Hughes	1						27	5' 3"
"	Hugh Lawrence	"		1	1			19	5' 3"
"	John W. Rudden & Family	"	3		1	1	1	26	5' 6"
"	Edmund Boland	"	1		1			47	5' 3"
"	13th Euphemia Minot & Family	"	3		1	2		44	
"	Joseph Thompson	1			1			24	5' 4"
"	15th David Miller	"		1	1			33	5' 3"
"	William Thompson	1			1			25	5' 6"
"	Charles Townsend	1			1			52	5' 3"
"	Charles W. Hill & Wife	"	2		1	1		34	5' 3"
"	John M. Leach	"		1	1			18	5' 6"
"	William Angel & Family	5			1	1	3	41	5' 1"
"	Thomas Sillitoe	1			1			50	5' 3"
"	28th James Wood	"		1	1			18	5' 7"
"	Richard Lockhart	"		1	1			20	5' 11"
"	21st Isabella Johnson	"		1		1		47	
"	22nd John Bell	"		1	1			70	5' 3"
"	Peter Rowley & Wife	"	2		1	1		42	5' 6"
"	23rd John W. Lyons	"	1		1			31	5' 4"
"	Elyaketa Grant	1				1		48	
"	24th Thomas Martin	1			1			38	5' 3"
"	25th Thomas Field & Wife	"	2		1	1		45	5' 6"
"	26th Ann Robinson & Daughter	"	2			1	1	28	
"	William Grant	1			1			63	5' 6"
"	Thomas Lindsey	1			1			48	5' 4"
"	Georgina W. Kenzie	"		1		1		20	
"	Margaret Emery	"		1		1		45	
		112	127	226	281	95	89		

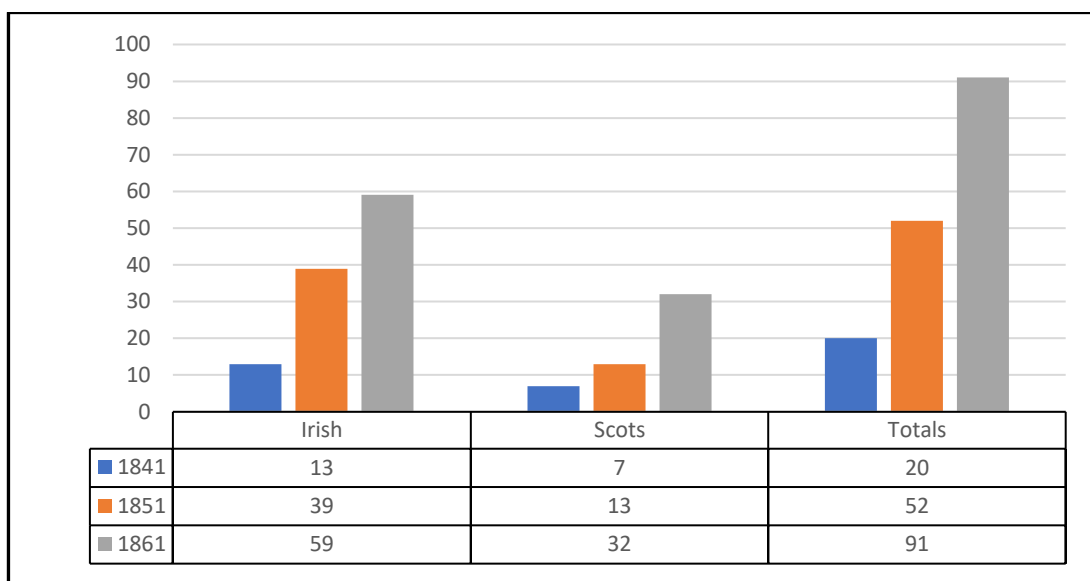


Figure 3.9: Irish and Scots Paupers in Cumberland workhouses, 1841-1861

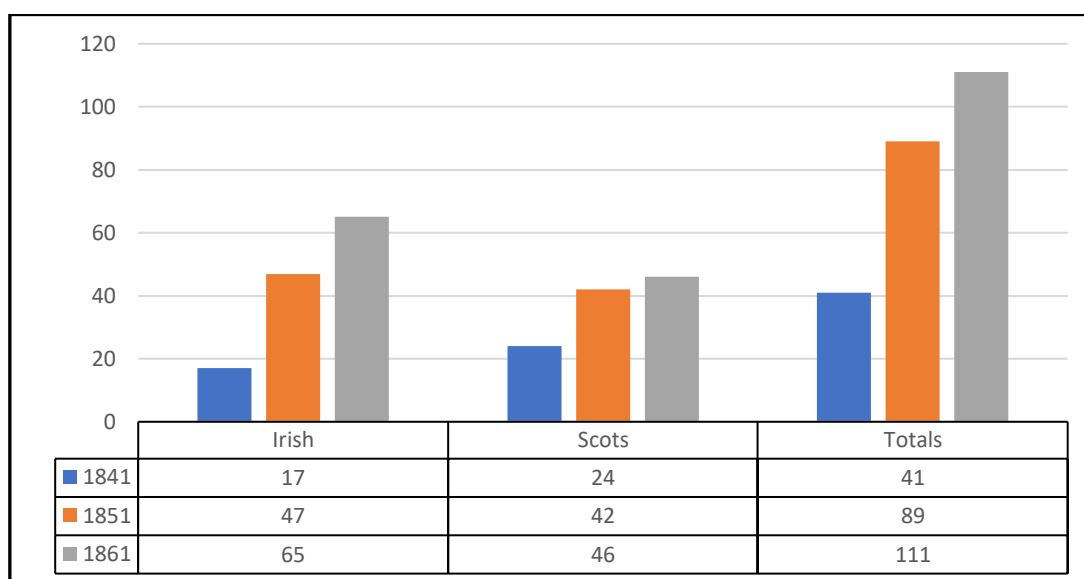


Figure 3.10: Irish and Scots Paupers in Northumberland workhouses, 1841-1861

Chapter 4

Introduction:

1. Whoever gives to the poor, from motives of benevolence or religion, wishes to give to the great advantage; and that bounty, no doubt is best bestowed, which does the most good at the least experience.
2. The good purposes of Hospitals are answered in a great degree, and in a form more practicable in small towns, by Dispensaries, for furnishing advice and medicine to the Poor, gratis.
3. Great numbers oppressed at once with disease and poverty are restored...to health and the capacity of supporting themselves. Such a provision cannot but be useful in the city of Carlisle.
4. Whatever provision the humanity of our laws has made for the ordinary wants of the poor, in case of sickness, parish relief often comes too late, and always too sparingly.
5. Where a dispensary is open, every poor man has access to advice and medicine. and a claim to the attendance whenever wanted of a Physician Surgeon and

Figure 4.7: A Plan for the Carlisle Dispensary with list of Subscribers.¹⁶

Extent of failure	Per Cent of Total Crofting District	Per Cent of Total Farming Districts	Percent of Highland Districts
Entirely	76	59	67
Almost Entirely	15	24	20
Partially	9	12	10
Half	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100	100

Table 4.9: Failure of Potato Crop in Scotland¹⁷

¹⁶ A Plan of the Carlisle Dispensary with list of Subscribers, Jackson Collection, Carlisle public library.

¹⁷ T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.35, Calculated from *Destitution Papers, Second Statement of the Destitution Committee of the Free Church*, pp. 6-13.

	1841	%	1851	%	1861	%
Whitehaven Irish and Scots paupers	5	4.1	21	11.7	21	7.2
Whitehaven all paupers	123		180		292	
Tynemouth Irish and Scots paupers	12	8.2	12	4.3	50	19.2
Tynemouth all paupers	146		280		260	

Cockermouth Irish and Scots paupers	3	4.8	6	2.8	14	4.7
Cockermouth all paupers	63		217		300	
Morpeth Irish and Scots paupers	9	19.6	10	17	3	8.1
Morpeth all paupers	46		59		37	

Wigton Irish and Scots paupers	3	3.5	5	3.8	10	8.2
Wigton all paupers	86		132		122	
Hexham Irish and Scots paupers	3	2.4	9	5.0	15	8.2
Hexham all paupers	123		180		182	

Table 4.10: Irish and Scots paupers in workhouses in selected towns in the far north.

18

¹⁸ *Census England and Wales, 1861, Enumerators' Books*, HO 107, RG9

Chapter 5

Name	Total No. of houses	No. of lodging houses	English	Irish	Scots	Total Occ's	% of Irish occ's	Ave. No. of persons per house
Ribton Lane	25	12	144	77	4	225	34	9.0
Mount Pleasant	10		27	19	-	46	41	4.6
Bardy Lane & Steps	46	2	165	44	5	214	21	4.7
Littledale lane	16	1	52	33		85	39	5.3
Hamilton Lane	7		36	6	2	44	14	6.2
Swinburne Court	28	1	84	59		143	41	5.1
Gale lane	5	2	24	15		39	38	7.8
Nicholson's Lane	18		71	13	12	96	14	5.3
Gale Back lane	5	1	34	10		43	23	8.6
Patterson's Buildings	13	1 1	50	33	1	84	39	6.5
Gale Court	8	1	21	13		34	38	4.3
Swing Pump Lane	16	1	68	57	4	129	44	8.1
Barker's Buildings	8	7 Cellars	49	17		66	26	8.3
Old Town	11	1	63	9	1	70	13	6.4
Heslop Court	4		12	16		28	57	7.0
Fisher's Court	6	1	20	20		40	50	6.7
Totals	226	25	920 (66%)	437 (32 %)	29 (2%)	1386		6.1 (overall average)

Table 5.12: Residential survey, west side of Whitehaven, 1851.

Name	No. of dwellings (Houses and Cellars)	Total No. of occupants	Ave. no. of persons per house	Ave. Household size	Household		No. of Lodgers
					Max	Min	
Ribton Lane	25	225	11.1	8	20	2	30
Mount Pleasant	10	46	4.6	5.1	7	3	5
Bardy Lane & Steps	46	214	4.7	4.7	11	2	13
Littledale lane	16	85	5.3	5.3	8	2	6
Hamilton	7	44	6.3	6.3	8	4	5
Swinburne Court	28	143	5.1	5.5	10	2	8
Gale lane	5	39	7.8	9.7	15	7	19
Nicholson's Lane	18	96	5.3	5.6	15	2	23
Gale Back	5	43	8.6	6.1	15	2	9
Patterson's Buildings	13	84	6.5	6	12	2	7
Gale Court	8	34	4.3	5	9	2	5
Swing Pump Lane	16	129	8.1	7.6	16	3	18
Barker's Buildings	8	66	8.3	4.7	8	2	2
Old Town	11	70	6.4	5.8	8	1	4
Heslop Court	4	28	7.0	7	9	4	5
Fisher's	6	40	6.7	6.7	17	2	8
Totals	226	1386	6.1	6.1			167
							(12%)

Table 5.13: Whitehaven residential survey, household size, number of lodgers, 1851.¹⁹

¹⁹ *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books*, H0-2436c

Name	No. of Children	No. of Children of Irish parentage	Age	
			Max	Min
Ribton Lane	68	15	12	1
Mount Pleasant	14	6	14	1
Bardy Lane &	79	15	9	1
Littledale lane	27	11	12	2
Hamilton Lane	15	5	12	4
Swinburne	42	7	7	2
Gale lane	7	1	1	9
Nicholson's	24	5	10	1
Gale Back lane	15	4	14	8
Patterson's	26	6	7	1
Gale Court	8	3	12	1
Swing Pump	37	10	13	1
Barker's	18	18	12	1
Old Town	31	9	11	1
Heslop Court	13	13	5	3
Fisher's Court	4	4	5	1
Totals	428	132		
	(31%)	(31%)		

Table 5.14: Whitehaven residential survey, child occupancy²⁰

Name	Total No. of houses	English Heads of households	Irish Heads of households	Total heads of households
Ribton Lane	25	27	23	50
Mount Pleasant	10	2	7	9
Bardy Lane & Steps	46	24	22	46
Littledale lane	16	9	8	17
Hamilton Lane	7	4	3	7
Swinburne Court	28	15	11	26
Gale lane	5	4	1	5
Nicholson's Lane	18	17	3	20
Gale Back lane	5	8	2	10
Patterson's Buildings	13	7	7	14
Gale Court	8	4	3	7
Swing Pump Lane	16	23	15	38
Barker's Buildings	8	13	5	18
Old Town	11	22	3	25
Heslop Court	4	2	2	4
Fisher's Court	6	5	4	9
Totals	226	186 (61%)	119 (39%)	305

Table 5.15: Whitehaven residential survey, sample streets²¹

²⁰ *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books, H02436c.*

²¹ *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books, H02436c*

Town Area	English	Irish	Scots	Totals
West Side	3483	743	80	4306
Central	4411	471	99	4981
East Side	4425	563	98	5086
Totals	12319	1777	277	14373

Table 5.16: English, Irish and Scots resident in Whitehaven.²²

	Irish	Non-Irish
England and Wales	5.5	
Lancashire	8.79	6.67
Liverpool	9.35	7.22
Whitehaven	6.0	6.1
Cleator Moor	9.1	6.7

Table 5.17: Irish and non-Irish percentages of population at country, county, large town, and small-town levels.

²² *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books*

West Side						
CEB ref	English	Irish	Scots	Totals	Census Disc No.	Disc. Ref.
50-112	994	73	19	1086	6	2436b
113-154	655	63	5	723	6	2436b
155-221	838	284	36	1158	6	2436b
223-294	996	323	20	1339	6	2436b
Totals	3483	743	80	4306		
Central Area						
300-326	496	21	10	527	6	2436b
331-380	824	75	14	913	6	2436b
010-65	1468	179	28	1675	7	2436c
66-96	237	130	10	377	7	2436c
98-140	693	29	24	746	7	2436c
144-194	693	37	13	743	7	2436c
Totals	4411	471	99	4981		
East Side						
197-240	716	72	10	798	7	2436c
245-308	1037	113	21	1171	7	2436c
311-353	580	58	12	650	7	2436c
357-436	1236	272	29	1537	6	2436c
442-492	856	48	26	930	6	2436c
Totals	4425	563	98	5086		

Table 5.18: Distribution of ethnic groups in Whitehaven, 1851²³

²³ *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books*

District	Irish Weavers	Irish Spinners	Scots Weavers	Scots Spinners	English weavers	English Spinners	Totals	Total Labour force	Percent of labour	Children <14 years	Total population
Caldewgate	161	4	178	9	903	44	1299	5687	22.8%	2001	7688
Botchergate	48	13	39	29	192	81	402	3177	12.7%	2177	5354
English Street and adjacent Lanes	12	1	16	2	91	9	131	2174	6.0%	894	3068
Upperby	26	3	17	1	119	10	176	554	31.8%	179	733
Rickergate	16	1	9	1	21	7	55	1953	3.3%	882	2835
Buckabank	0	0	6	1	15	23	45	483	9.3%	193	676
Scotch Street, Fisher Street, Abbey Street	14	0	4	0	42	3	63	3546	1.8%	1198	4744
Totals	277	22	269	43	1383	177	2171	17574	12.4%	7524	25,098

Table 6.6: Carlisle Weavers and Spinners 1851, Irish, Scots and English handloom weavers in Carlisle, 1851.

Source: *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books*, Carlisle district 568, Sub-District, St Mary 3; Sub-District, St Cuthbert

District	Irish Weaver		Irish Spinners		Scots Weavers		Scots Spinners		English Weavers		English Spinners		Bobbin winders		Factory Workers (all)		Power-loom operators (all)	'Wife' of Weaver or spinner	Totals
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
Caldewgate	106	55	1	3	115	63	6	3	629	284	42	2	21	98	22	354	39	203	2046
Botchergate	38	10	4	9	31	8	16	13	149	43	40	41	0	57	0	72	8	68	607
English Street and adjacent lanes	10	2	0	1	12	4	2	0	57	34	9	0	0	37	0	0	9	14	191
Scotch Street and Fisher Street area	4	10	0	0	4	0	0	0	32	10	2	1	2	40	0	0	7	74	186
Upperby	12	14	0	3	12	5	0	1	67	52	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	4	180
Rickergate	6	10	0	1	6	3	1	0	18	3	2	0	7	28	0	0	4	12	101
Buckabank	0	0	0	0	3	3	1	0	10	5	19	4	17	56	16	30	0	14	178
Totals	176	101	5	17	183	86	26	17	962	431	114	58	47	316	38	456	67	389	3489

Table 6.7: Gender of Irish, Scots and English handloom weavers in Carlisle, 1851.

Source: *Census England and Wales, 1851, Enumerators' Books*, Carlisle district 568, Sub-District, St Mary 3; Sub-District, St Cuthbert Carlisle district 568, Sub-District, St Mary 3, Film Ref. HO 107- 2430b; Sub-District, St Cuthbert, Film Ref. HO 107- 2429a and 2429b;

	Irish Weaver		Irish Spinners		Scots Weavers		Scots Spinners		English Weavers		English Spinners		Bobbin winders		Factory Workers (all)		Power-loom operators	'Wife'*	Totals	Percentage of total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F				
Irish		277		22		-		-		-		-		52		74	3	56	484	13.9%
Scots		-		-		269		43		-		-		46		64	2	47	471	13.5%
English		-		-		-		-		1393		172		265		356	62	286	2534	72.6%

Table 6.8: Gender of Irish, Scots and English handloom weavers in Caldewgate, Carlisle1851

Source: 1851 census data: Carlisle district 568, Sub-District, St Mary 3, Film Ref. HO 107- 2430b; Sub-District, StCuthbert, Film Ref. HO 107- 2429a and 2429b. * wife of weaver or spinner who was head of household.

District	Data location HO-107	Irish Weavers	Irish Spinners	Scots Weavers	Scots Spinners	English weavers	English Spinners	Totals	Total population	Children <14 years	Total Labour force
Dalston	2431(b)	0	0	0	0	125	29	154	1681	466	1215
Brampton	2427 (a)	2	0	8	0	237	0	247	3188	940	2248
Surrounding Villages*		13	0	42	0	94	0	149	3061	826	2235
Totals		15	0	50	0	456	29	550	7930	2232	5698

**Table 6.9: Weavers and Spinners in Dalston, Brampton and surrounding Villages
Irish, Scots and English handloom weavers in Dalston, Brampton and Villages, 1851.**

Source: 1851 census data: Carlisle district 568, Sub-District, St Mary 3; Sub-District, St Cuthbert.

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1.6 *Parliamentary Statutes (chronologically)*

1413, *Act of 1 Hen. V, c.8*,

1494, *The Vagabonds and Beggars Acte*

Threatens vagabonds with three days in the stocks on a diet of bread and water.

1547, *The Statute of Legal Settlement*

Provides for the Branding or enslavement of sturdy beggars. The impotent poor are to receive relief and have cottages built for their use.

1572, *The Vagabonds Acte*

Introduces the poor rate for relieving, 'aged, poor, impotent and decayed persons.

1579, *The Acte for Punishment of Strong and Idle Beggars and Relief of the Poor and Impotent* Defines parish responsibilities.

1597, *The Acte for the Relief of the Poore (39 Eliz, c.3)*

Collection of poor rate and administration of poor relief.

1601, *Acte for the Relief of the Poore, 1601 (43 Eliz, c.2)*

Minor amendments to 1597 Act.

1662, *Poor Relief (Settlement) Act*

Allows parishes to remove newcomers 'likely to become chargeable'.

1697, *Relief of the Poor Act*

Protects settlement certificate holders from removal and requires badging of paupers.

1722-3, *Workhouse Test Act*,

Allows parishes to set up workhouses and restrict poor relief to those willing to enter.

1782, *Relief of the Poor Act 1782 (22 Geo III, c.83)*

Allows parishes alone or in Union to run workhouses for non-able-bodied paupers, managed by Board of Guardians.

1815 (473), *Report from Committee on the State of Mendicity in the Metropolis*

1819, *Removal of the Poor Act*

1824, *Vagrancy Act, (5 Geo V, c. 83)*

Removes twenty-seven existing statutes and reduces the penalties for vagrancy.

1834, *Poor Law Amendment Act, (4 Wm. IV, c. 74)*

1837-38, *Vagrant Act Amendment*

Amends the act for punishing idle and disorderly persons, and rogues and vagabonds.

1838 *Poor Relief (Ireland) Act*

1838, *Vagrancy Act (1 & 2 Vict. c. 38)*

1842, *Poor Law Amendment Act (5 & 6 Vic. c.57)*

Allows casuals (and vagrants) to be given work before release. Allows poor relief to able-bodied male paupers satisfying a labour test.

1844, *Poor Law Amendment Act*

Allows unmarried pauper mothers to claim against putative fathers. Prohibits outdoor relief for able bodied men and women apart from a few exceptions.

1845, *Poor Law (Scotland) Act*

1846, *Poor Removal Act*

A bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the removal of the poor.

1852, *Common Lodging House Act*

1861, *Removal of Poor Persons to Scotland and Ireland,*

1864, *Houseless Poor Act*

1865, *Union Chargeability Act*

Parish contributions to be based on rateable value rather than number of paupers, Union becomes area of settlement, residency required for irremovability reduced to one year.

1868, *Vagrancy Act*

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